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John F. Carr

1902

THE
DEFENCE OF PLEVNA

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MUSHIR GHAZI OSMAN NURI PASHA

From a Sketch taken by the Author on December 9, 1877

'Arma virumque cano'

THE
DEFENCE OF PLEVNA

1877

WRITTEN BY ONE WHO TOOK PART IN IT

BY

WILLIAM V. HERBERT

مالزم هربرت

دشمن قارنجه ايسه فيل كي ظن ايله

'Though an enemy be small as an ant
act as if he were an elephant.'

Turkish Proverb

LONDON
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1895



· Ras't, Hörner, ras't, die sträubende Natur
Zu dieser Blutthat tannend aufzuhetzen!
Wer nach den Kronen dieser Erde greift,
Der muss das Höchste an das Höchste setzen.'

KÖRNER

PREFACE

THERE is a German proverb, 'Was lange währt wird gut': 'That which takes a long time will turn out well.' Not that I have occupied sixteen years in reducing to writing my modest share in the historical events which have rendered the name of Plevna famous for all times; have made it as dear to the Turk as Waterloo is to the Briton, as Thermopylæ was to the ancient Greek; have constituted it the Ottoman national symbol of heroism, endurance, and sacrifice—but I have allowed nearly sixteen years to elapse before I carried out the early-conceived, oft-considered, and always-adjourned project of recording that which I saw with my own eyes and experienced in my own person in the eventful year 1877. To this I shall confine myself in the following pages, so that, possible defects of memory excepted, my narrative may be relied upon to be as near to actual fact as personal observation, by means of exceptionally keen eyes and ears, can render it.

I made voluminous memoranda during the cam-

paign, which were lost in the final holocaust of December 10, 1877, with the exception of one little note-book and a few sheets of memoranda which I happened to have about my person on the day of the sortie. The former contains a hasty pencil-sketch of Osman Pasha. Notwithstanding its faults, my publishers have consented to reproduce it. As a work of art it is abominable, as a likeness capital. It has one objectionable feature: the little drawing gives the impression of its prototype being a tall, spare man. This is not the case: Osman was thick-set, and not above average height.

During my Russian captivity I rewrote much of that which I had lost, assisting my memory by conversations with fellow-prisoners. These notes form, next to actual recollection, the principal groundwork of my narrative.

Although I claim British descent, my knowledge of the English tongue is an acquired one. I was seven years old before I commenced to learn English. This will account for the occasional un-English turn of phrases which hypercritical readers may detect.

For some years after the war I was too young, too careless, too busy in my enjoyment of health, youth, money, and permissible gaieties to bestow thought upon the importance and usefulness of recording my personal share in historical events.

Then followed easy and undeserved successes in another sphere of life, all-absorbing occupation, studies, travels, domestic cares; finally, adversity, sorrow, hard struggle, and overwork. In short, I do not exaggerate when I say that for sixteen years I have been unable to spare the time to write my book.

It is the unavoidable consequence of the rank I held (lieutenant) that the horizon of my experience was limited. I was in the position of an observer of a painting who is placed with his nose almost touching the canvas. He cannot take in the grand-total of the pictorial idea, but will see each phase in all its details; thus he will probably perceive in the long run more than the man who confines himself to the broad outlines.

The disadvantage which falls on the inferior ranks in warfare, of being necessarily precluded from the range of its broader and more comprehensive aspects, is counterbalanced by the nearer insight which they obtain into the real, and horrible, side of campaigning. Rulers and statesmen, commanders-in-chief, and, to a certain extent, newspaper-correspondents also, see the ornamental fringe. I have witnessed much that was heroic, much that was grand, soul-stirring, sublime; but infinitely more of what was hideous and terrible, far beyond the descriptive abilities of even the most cunning pen. I have seen unspeakable sights and inconceivable horrors. It is a pet idea of mine that it may be part of the scheme of Divine

justice—in which I, for one, fondly believe—that the monarchs and politicians who bring about wars will be tormented, when their time of ultra-terrestrial punishment is come, by visions faintly resembling the realities which I, a shuddering, innocent spectator, have witnessed.

I have read somewhere this remark : ‘If you have too firm a belief in the happy creed of your childhood, try the Holy Land’—to the truth of which, by the way, I can testify from personal observation. The effect is magic. To paraphrase that sentence : ‘If you have too firm a belief in the glories of soldiering, try a war.’ The overfed, stay-at-home commanders-in-chief may get their share of cheap glory ; to the soldier and the fighting officer the sordid considerations of food, of health, of quarters, leave no room for the hankering after, or attainment of, ephemeral fame. If this volume should serve to dispel any illusions, if it should contribute ever so little towards the love and maintenance of peace, its purpose is fulfilled.

W. V. H.

LONDON : November, 1894.

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THE DEFENCE OF PLEVNA

INTRODUCTION

RETROSPECT OF THE EVENTS IN THE EAST

1875 to 1877

THE quarrel between Russia and Turkey is almost as old as that between cat and dog. Long before the present European Turkey was seized by its actual owners¹ the Russians lusted for Byzantium. The Muscovite legend that the possession of Constantinople has been prophesied from time immemorial expresses the national ambition, and reflects credit upon the ingenuity of its inventors, who probably date from a much more recent period.

The campaign of 1877 and 1878 is reckoned as the tenth war between the rival States; it had become unavoidable from the moment when the insurrection broke out in Herzegovina in July 1875, in which Bosnia also joined. The rebellion was secretly promoted, and had probably been instigated, by Russia; whilst Servia and Montenegro, despite their official protestations of neutrality, tried to usurp the rôle of mediators. The Porte's attempted subjugation of the rebels was lax, owing to the fear of European intervention. But when the insurgents had insolently rejected, in March

¹ For Notes, see end of book.

and April 1876, repeated proposals of pacification, Turkey, having done her part towards a peaceful settlement, commenced energetic action. In May, Turkey was compelled to reckon also with Montenegro, where both ruler and populace were very bitter.

The dissatisfaction of Europe with the Sublime Porte received a fatal incentive through the assassination by fanatics of the French and German Consuls in Saloniki on May 6, 1876. Turkey, to atone for this deplorable event, hastened to comply with the stringent demands of the Powers.

To make matters worse, internal troubles shook the foundations of the Empire. Sultan Abdul Aziz was dethroned on May 30, 1876, and assassinated on June 4. Murad V., his nephew, was the successor. On June 15 three Cabinet Ministers were murdered by a Circassian officer in the house of another Minister. Murad went mad and was deposed; on August 31, Abdul Hamid II., his brother, succeeded him.

Meanwhile the insurrection of Bulgaria, planned and prepared by Russia, had broken out (June 1876). It was the Christian Bulgarians' war of annihilation against the Mahomedan minority. The peoples of the Ottoman Empire did not deceive themselves as to the real source to whom this blot upon the century's history was traceable, nor as to her ultimate designs. Unmentionable horrors were committed in the name of the Saviour.

But the rebels had undervalued the Porte's vitality. The troops suppressed the revolt, paying the Christians back in their own coin with barbarism, incendiarism, outrages, slaughter, and wholesale executions. By this action the last remaining vestige of European sympathy with Turkey in the coming fray was alienated—undeservedly so; for, granting that clemency might have been shown, we must remember that the Christians were the aggressors. Europe was startled by the party cry of 'Bulgarian atrocities,' fostered and spread by Russia. Outside England—and there only a section of the public—nobody seemed to remember

that the Christians merely received back that which they had dealt out to the Mahomedans.

The Servians, having meanwhile finished their warlike preparations with Russian money, crossed the frontier, at Russia's secret mandate, on July 27, 1876, ostensibly to re-establish peace in the rebel provinces. Russia sent men, arms, ammunition, cash. Simultaneously Montenegro, pulled by the same strings and furnished with the same sinews, seized the sword. Thus the curtain rose on the military prologue to the coming struggle: the Turkish-Servian war of the year 1876.

Contrary to general expectation, Turkey was successful, a circumstance which puzzled and disquieted Europe, and should have opened Russia's eyes as to the real power of resistance still inherent in the 'Sick Man.' Montenegro was held in check, whilst Serbia was totally beaten, and had to solicit European intervention (August 29, 1876). A truce was arranged, which the Servians broke treacherously as soon as Russian resources had placed them in a position to resume the fight. Again they were defeated, and the road into the heart of the country was open to the Turkish armies. A peremptory telegram, despatched by the Czar from Livadia on October 30, 1876, put an end to the operations of the peaceably inclined Turks. On October 31 a truce was again made (peace only on March 1, 1877), and the Sultan, vainly trying to avoid fresh complications by leniency and compliance, granted the rebel vassal State the totally unmerited terms of a return to the *status quo ante*.

But Russia was determined to have her tenth attempt upon Stamboul. Neither the conference at Constantinople (December 1876) nor the new Constitution of the Ottoman Empire (December 23, 1876), which was played by the Porte, not unskilfully, as a trump card showing a desire to please, nor, lastly, the first and only session of the Turkish Parliament (opened March 19, 1877), could avert an appeal to arms, and on April 24, 1877, the Czar Alexander II., totally unprovoked, being then in Kishineff (Bessarabia) for the

manœuvres, declared war against the Sultan Abdul Hamid II., after having prepared for it for nearly two years.

The sympathy of Europe was generally with Russia; in England alone public opinion held on the whole with the Turks. The Powers declared their neutrality. Roumania being forced to abstain for the present from active co-operation, concluded with Russia an alliance of temporary passive, armed support; Servia, sore and smarting, kept in the background, prepared to pounce like a vulture upon the prey when Turkey had fallen. Brave little Montenegro again took the field.

Thus broke out the tenth Russo-Turkish War. It promised to be all the more bloody and barbaric from the fact that the rulers on both sides took care to stamp it as a 'holy' one.

A really grand patriotic movement made itself felt throughout the Turkish possessions. It was a question of existence. Russia meant annihilation of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, and all the world knew it.

PART I

THE RUSH FOR PLEVNA



CHAPTER I

HOW I CAME TO JOIN THE TURKS

JULY 1876 TO JANUARY 1877

MY modesty shrinks from the task that the present chapter exacts, in which well-nigh every sentence will have to commence with the fatal words 'I am,' or 'I was.' However, I brace myself up with the words of the great Goethe: 'Only curs are modest.' If we are to believe his biographers, he acted fully up to this maxim throughout life. I will try to imitate his imposing and praiseworthy example.

I am on my father's side of British descent. My grandfather fought at Waterloo, and I remember that as a youngster I was sometimes asked by his widow to acknowledge the receipt, in English, of a quarterly remittance which was sent to her from London. My mother was a member of a famous Huguenot family.

I was born in Germany in 1859. My father, a man of means and position, was settled as a merchant in Berlin. After I had finished my studies at a public school he obtained for me a seat, as apprentice or junior clerk, in a mercantile office: to my unspeakable disgust, for I aspired to higher things. My youthful ambition had been to become a doctor, a soldier, or a butcher; in fact, somebody who kills. Later, I had developed a taste for linguistic studies, and at the time that I write of I spoke English and French fluently, Latin and Spanish tolerably. Philology, philosophy, and other 'ologies tempted me with their laurels of fame; but my father was heart and soul a merchant, and a merchant he

was determined to make of me. Fretting and fuming within me, I took my seat, in January 1876, at a dirty desk in Messrs. Rosenkranz & Schneiderstiefel's indescribably dirty office. Messrs. Rosenkranz were commission merchants and dealers in colonial produce. They employed half a dozen juniors, but no clerks: the latter have the vicious habit of asking for salaries, whereas in Germany juniors (or apprentices) have to work three to four years for nothing.

Messrs. Rosenkranz were Jews, as anyone could tell by their noses, their accent, their penurious habits, their prevailing flavour of garlic, and their greasy appearance. They pretended to be Christians. The Protestant religion in Berlin must have been in a low way to accept such recruits.

That I remained honest and a decent sort of fellow after having been for a twelvemonth in Messrs. Rosenkranz' office is one of the most creditable feats of my career.

Should my volume gain the distinction of being read by some English clerk with hours ten to five, an hour for lunch, a half-holiday on Saturday, an entire one on Sunday, and three weeks' vacation in summer, I should like him to ponder over the following details of Messrs. Rosenkranz' office arrangements, which were only slightly worse than things generally are in German offices:—Hours, 8 A.M. to 10 P.M., no time for lunch allowed (I had to eat my sandwiches whilst indexing the letter-book); Saturdays, 8 A.M. to midnight; Sundays, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M.; no holidays.

I was told that one of Mr. Schneiderstiefel's Schnorrer ancestors had been kept in a dungeon for a long while by a bold, bad baron of the period, and this was the way in which his descendant took tardy revenge upon the Christians. The office was like a dungeon, only a good deal dirtier.

After a free-and-easy life in college, with fencing, boating, drill, rifle-practice, fun, fights, and everything else that fires the youthful heart, with plenty of liberty, splendid health, a love of adventure, and high spirits, my commercial experience was a source of constant torture. Therefore, when the Servian War broke out in July, I declared to my father that

I should go and volunteer to fight for whichever side would have me—the Turkish for choice; for I had fallen in with some young Englishmen studying in Berlin who were partial to the Turkish cause, and hated a Russian more than anything in this world, save a German Jew.

My father laughed at me. I was too young (seventeen years and three months), I spoke neither language, I did not know when I was well off, there was no profit or glory to be got, but possibly a wound, mutilation, and incapacity for life, and so forth. Of all his perfectly sensible arguments, only one weighed with me: I did not speak the language. This deficiency I resolved at once to remedy. The Russo-Turkish War was looming in the distance. After a brief reflection I embraced the Turkish cause, bought a grammar, and commenced the study of the puzzling Arabic characters with terrific zeal. There was a little *cabaret* where one of the waitresses was a handsome Circassian girl. Thither I went with my British friends that selfsame night, and there I embraced the Turkish cause once more—with greater ardency than discretion.

As I obtained a very good knowledge of the Turkish language in six months with two hours' daily practice and three to four hours on Sundays, it may interest students to hear how I went to work. First I mastered the characters, which took me a month. Then I acquired a stock of words—a thousand nouns, five hundred adjectives and verbs, and a mass of adverbs, conjunctions, interjections, and short phrases. I started a vocabulary of my own, in which I classified the nouns under headings, such as 'Human body,' 'Love,' 'House,' 'Town,' 'Country,' 'Military matters,' &c. This vocabulary I committed to memory so thoroughly that even now, after seventeen years' entire cessation of practice, there is hardly a word missing in my recollection. It took me three months. The remaining two months I devoted to the elements of the grammar, to reading, and to conversation with a retired army officer who had taken part in a Prussian military mission to Constantinople, where he had stayed for

some years as adjutant to a German general in the Ottoman Service. From him I learnt also a good deal respecting Turkish military matters.

The Turkish language is, in my opinion, chiefly remarkable for its brevity of expression, for the attention paid to euphony (which renders it agreeable to the trained ear), and for its verb. The Turkish verb is a thing of joy and beauty. In the course of my linguistic studies I have made the personal acquaintance of a good many verbs. Not to mention such an old friend as the Latin verb, I will only refer to the Arabic one, with which I have been on pretty good terms. But the Turkish verb deserves the first prize for complicated completeness and difficulty of acquisition. There is something spontaneous about *amo, amas, amat*; it comes to you naturally; once learnt as a seven-year-old, you will remember it as a dying centenarian. But *severim, severisin, sever, severiz, severiniz, severler*, flavours of barbaric despotism, and the twenty-four forms of derived verbs must have been instituted on purpose to prevent Franks and Infidels from learning the language. Although the grammar of the Turkish verb is really beautiful in its perfection, it is so extremely artificial that one is tempted to believe the language to have been invented, like Volapük.

I was assisted in my studies by the timely death, in August 1876, of old Rosenkranz, the founder and senior of the firm, which caused cruel satisfaction among his acquaintances and dependents. If he had made a bargain with the Devil, I am convinced he at the end cheated him out of it. His partner, Schneiderstiefel, retired, and in September the two sons of Rosenkranz took over the business. They were of liberal education and views, and a change for the better immediately took place, 7 P.M. being henceforth the hour of closing. As regards commercial morality, however, the sons stood on an even lower level than the father.

The Turkish victories in Servia increased my desire to fight for the Crescent. When war with Russia had become imminent, and I considered the time had come for decisive

action, I declared to my father, one memorable Sunday evening in December, that I meant to take part in the coming fray ; that his previous objection of my ignorance of the language no longer obtained ; that I had secretly studied Turkish, and now offered to pass an examination in the idiom ; that I was nearly eighteen, and quite old enough to carry a rifle or a sword ; that mercantile life, such as I knew it, was unspeakably hateful to me ; that it ruined my health and my spirits ; that I would sooner be in my grave than in Messrs. Rosenkranz' office ; that, finally, I should prefer to go with his consent and with his money, but, should he withhold either, I should manage to do without, but go I should anyhow. After some violent scenes, much wordy warfare, a good deal of deliberation and consultation, and study of ways and means and chances, which caused a delay of a week or two, my father, seeing that I was determined, gave a reluctant consent.

He had always held with the Turks—he was one of the few men in Berlin who did ; but mother's horror on finding that I meant to fight for the Moslems against the Christians was great. However, the matter was represented to her by father and me in a new light, and although, of course, the idea of losing me caused her much sorrow and many tears, she began to think that I had embraced a righteous cause.

Uncles, aunts, cousins, were horrified. Some comic and lively scenes took place. The more they expostulated, the more I laughed. The humour of the situation being invisible to them, they grew indignant and nasty ; all the more I enjoyed the fun. It was gravely asserted that I had turned a heathen, and my poor old spinster aunt Sophy prayed for me daily.

My outfit consisted of good underclothing, two spare pairs of boots, a thick rug, a capital field-glass, a revolver, a Turkish dictionary, a pocket-Bible, and some maps. I had several first-rate introductions to Europeans residing in Constantinople, a passport, and credentials for the British and German Embassies and Consulates in Turkey. I had

also 50*l.* in cash and letters of credit to the amount of 500*l.*

Thus equipped I took a tearful, heartrending farewell from father, mother, and my two young sisters. My courage sank at the sight of the sobbing girls and mother's streaming face. I smothered them with kisses and cried as though my heart would break. Father said: 'If you follow the dictates of honour, reason, and conscience you can never go wrong.' He reminded me of our proud family motto, 'Fulgura frango.'

When I was alone in the train which carried me to Marseilles—father had paid the first-class through fare to Constantinople—the glorious sensation of freedom dried my tears and drove away all evil forebodings. No more detestable office routine, which takes all the manhood out of a young fellow, and makes him that grovelling, crawling, half-starved creature into which clerks degenerate; no more dealings with those odious Jews, with their pettifogging profits and sharp practice: a life of manliness, adventure, physical activity, and possibilities of distinction before me—these thoughts intoxicated me like wine.

At Marseilles I embarked on a fine steamer, which landed me in Constantinople, after a tolerably good passage, on February 2, 1877.

CHAPTER II

IN CONSTANTINOPLE

FEBRUARY AND MARCH 1877

I TOOK a room in the Hôtel de Byzance in Pera. For a week I strolled about, seizing greedily every opportunity of talking Turkish, thus adding practice and experience to my not inconsiderable knowledge of the language.

It is not part of my appointed task to present a picture of the much-described Ottoman capital. I may be permitted to mention some few features which struck me forcibly.

First and foremost comes the appalling difference between Constantinople as seen from the sea and Constantinople as observed from its own interior. From the deck of the steamer, as she slowly wended her way along the shore of the Bosphorus to her mooring-place just below the first (old) bridge across the Golden Horn, the city looked indescribably beautiful. The day happened to be fair—a rare occurrence in February and March, which are the worst months of the year in those regions—and the white house-fronts, the patches of dark green foliage, the blue water swarming with quaint craft below, above the crown of countless domes, towers, and minarets, make a *tout ensemble* which delights the eye like nothing that I have seen. The city, rising from the shore in amphitheatre shape, is spread out before you in a grand and lovely panorama. The contrast to this afforded by the dirty, neglected, dingy streets, the sordid, crooked alleys, the hovels in the Turkish, Jewish, and Greek quarters, the many deserted and decaying houses, is painful. It began to rain on

the afternoon of my arrival, and for three weeks the weather was what mariners call 'dirty'—very much so. The filth in the streets was indescribable, and the general sordidness of the surroundings—a few thoroughfares in Pera and Galata excepted—depressed me, much as a hideous typical London main road, say the Caledonian Road, fills me with suicidal tendencies on a wet afternoon.

The second point is the absence of that desperate hurry, that fever-heat, that pre-occupation marked in the countenances, which strike the observer in Berlin, London, and other Western cities. The natives of Stamboul seem to have nothing to do, and their only business appears, on the surface, to be the question how best to idle the time away. This is, in any case, the impression caused by their lazy gait, their leisurely movements and manners, the drift of their generally inane conversation. And yet those were times of popular excitement, of stirring events, of roused national passions. In periods of political stagnation human vitality in Stamboul must appear to be in a state of coma.

Thirdly, I wish to mention the sublime contentment of the Turk. All that Europeans consider as indispensable to the enjoyment of life he not only manages to do without, but even has no longing for. Theatres, restaurants, scientific institutes, gin-palaces, organised public meetings, political and municipal assemblies, clubs, casinos, dancing-saloons, lecture-halls, sports, games, gambling, parades like that of nocturnal Piccadilly, mission-halls, liquor-bars with female attendants—all these paraphernalia of modern culture and Christian civilisation form no part of his existence.² You find such things, on a Christian footing, in the Christian quarters. Home and family life, with its fireside, social intercourse, friendship, and even courtship, the Turk knoweth not; or, perhaps, the Turkish equivalents for the British and German notions of these things are so disfigured out of every resemblance that no Englishman or German would recognise them as such. The art of promenading is unknown to the Turk, therefore there are no promenades or boulevards in

Constantinople, the European quarter (Grande Rue de Pera) again excepted. The Turk's recreations are of a fourfold kind: loitering in the bazaars; sitting in dingy cafés listening to insipid recitals; on Fridays, strolls to places outside the town, notably to lovely Kiathané, at the northern end of the Golden Horn, a favourite resort of women and children; and, in fair weather, leisurely boat excursions on the Bosphorus.

In the fourth place I will but mention—for a chapter could be written on the subject—the intense devotion of the Turks. Islam enters into the daily life, into the very existence of its adherents, as no other faith does, the one possible exception being the creed of the Hindoos. Other religions, say the Christian and the Jewish faith, seem to be made for man, to keep him in contact with the Supreme Being despite the toil of, and struggle for, terrestrial existence; the Moslem appears to be created for his faith, to practise it in peace and spread it in war. I do not say this is so, only that it impresses you in this wise. Islam and the Ottoman Empire are not only inseparable—they are identical. For the same reason, a war with Turkey must always be a religious, a 'holy' (*sic*) war. One is tempted to regard this phrase as ironical, were it not used in such deadly earnest, as the records of history testify. The days of aggressive 'holy' wars are over; but defensive struggles of the Empire of the Crescent will continue to be as terrible as religious wars have ever been.

This brings me to the fifth and last point which I wish to emphasise as having struck me forcibly during my sojourn in Constantinople in February and March 1877: I refer to the patriotism, the warlike qualities, the fever-heat of preparation, the terrible earnestness of the Turks, all roused by the now unavoidable and imminent struggle with the intensely hated Russians. The coming 'holy' war, the strife for the existence of the Empire, the question of continued national and religious life or total political annihilation, constituted the all-absorbing passion, the one topic of conversation, the one motor of activity, the one pulse of regenerated life, the elixir vitæ, suddenly discovered, which had roused the

moribund country to grand and astounding vitality. The Russian Embassy and the countless Muscovite spies must have been asleep not to notice the new order of things; for, had it been observed, the dream of a military promenade to Constantinople would assuredly never have been allowed to enter the hearts of the Russian leaders. Yet such was the case: the warning embodied in the results of the Servian campaign was not heeded, the roused spirit of the populace was counted as naught, fanaticism and patriotism were ignored; totally insufficient forces were mobilised, and it was only the second crushing defeat before Plevna, on July 30, that brought about a rude awakening.

Almost every Turk with whom I conversed counted on England as an ally. Passing for a Briton, I was the recipient of much friendliness and goodwill. Germany and Austria were mistrusted. The neutrality of France was looked upon as certain.

I did not notice in the capital much ill-feeling on the score of religion. In the provinces fanaticism was intense.

The Semitic subjects of the Porte were enthusiastic in their affection for the country that gave them shelter. Many Jews held important official appointments. Thus, the Governor of the great military hospital, Haidar Pasha, was an Israelite. Greeks and Armenians were secretly in favour of Russia. As to the Franks,³ their opinions divided them into two camps.

A week after my arrival I presented my credentials to the Embassies and the Consuls, and was sent with a dragoman and a letter of introduction to the Seraskierat (Ministry of War).

A seemingly insurmountable obstacle was pointed out to me: none but orthodox Mahomedans are enlisted in the Turkish Army, the exceptions being a single regiment of cavalry, exclusively Christian, in Syria; the Model or School Artillery Regiment in Constantinople; the non-combatant officials attached to the Erkiani Harb (General Staff) and the War Ministry; the posts of instructors to the various training

colleges—many of them in the hands of Germans—and the Ambulance Service.

None of these would do for me. The Turkish cavalry is known to be the worst arm of the Service ; besides, I had no aptitude for horsemanship. The Model Artillery Regiment is stationary, and does not take the field. For the Ambulance I lacked the training. For a post of scribe and idler I had no predilection ; I might as well have remained with Rosenkranz & Schneiderstiefel : for the Sublime Porte has the vile habit of not paying the salaries of her servants.

It is true that the hard-and-fast rule mentioned above is relaxed, and sometimes entirely suspended, in actual warfare ; but as yet there was no war. Religious unity is still the one element of strength in the Ottoman Army.

It would weary the reader to have to peruse a record of the negotiations that followed : of the journeys to and fro, the correspondence, the difficulties overcome, the expedients employed, the prejudices reconciled ; suffice it to say that red-tape, the curse of modern administration in Turkey as well as at home, exhausted its resources ; that my excellent credentials, influential introductions, and high-class references did their work ; that pressure was brought to bear upon the authorities ; that, accompanied by an Embassy official, I had an interview with the Seraskier ; that, finally, I was allowed to swear fidelity to the Sultan, under certain conditions relative to the exercise of my religion and to my conduct both during and after the campaign.

It was a fortnight after my arrival that I took my oath of allegiance, in the Christian form, to the Sultan, on the flag with the Crescent, in the courtyard of the infantry and artillery barracks, Selimié, situated in a glorious position on the Bosphorus, opposite Stamboul, between Skutari in the north and Kadikiui in the south. I received my uniform and arms, and was enlisted, temporarily, in an infantry battalion stationed provisionally in Skutari.

My private clothes and effects I took with me. My money I banked with a merchant to whom my father had intro-

duced me, drawing small sums according to requirements.

What a change!—in the morning a ‘Milor’ in an expensive hotel, in the evening a private in the barracks!

Attached to Selimié are a handsome mosque, a well-equipped workshop, a powder-magazine, a pier for the Stamboul steamers, and a spacious drill-ground. Adjoining the building, on the top of an eminence, is the magnificent military hospital, Haidar Pasha; below are the British cemetery, with its ugly obelisk erected to the memory of 8,000 Crimean victims, a landing-stage, a dervish convent, and the terminus of the Asia Minor Railway. The view from the deck of a Stamboul-Haidar Pasha steamer over this group of buildings is exceedingly fine. Selimié looks like an imperial palace, and the hospital reminded me of some of the mediæval castles in Germany, notably of that near Waltershausen, in Thuringia. Haidar Pasha was the scene of Florence Nightingale’s labours.

My intention—known to the authorities—was, of course, to serve in the campaign as an officer.

There are two distinct and separate classes of officers in the Ottoman Army: firstly, *Mekteblis*, *i.e.* scholars,⁴ who have been educated in one of the numerous military colleges, and, having passed an examination, enter without practical training as second-lieutenants in the infantry and cavalry, as third-lieutenants in the engineers; ⁵ secondly, *Alailis*, *i.e.* ‘rankers,’ who have advanced from the ranks, without theoretical knowledge, often without the most elementary general education. There were a good many illiterate officers, particularly in the Gendarmerie. In 1877, one-fifth of all the officers were *mekteblis*; since then the proportion has grown considerably. It stands to reason that only the combination in one person of the education and theoretical knowledge of a *mektebli* and the experience and practical training of an *alaili* would give the average efficiency of, say, a German subordinate officer.

The *mekteblis* advance without further examination on

the recommendation of their superiors; their promotion is therefore dependent on patronage. The alails seldom rise beyond captaincy.

Turkish officers are not pensioned or dismissed for old age or inability to rise to higher ranks. Thus you find lieutenants fifty years old. A German writer mentions, as instances, an active lieutenant-colonel of ninety-three, an active centenarian brigadier. On the other hand, you have mushirs (marshals) under forty; Osman Pasha is a case in point. I have known captains under twenty.

The circumstance deserves mention that the military colleges of the Turkish Empire, forty altogether, are absolutely free.

The Ottoman Army has always suffered from a scarcity of officers in the lower grades; hence, probably, the acceptance of my services. Young men of high education and unexceptional *morale*, likely to exercise a salutary influence upon the spirits of the soldiers, were particularly welcome. I was given to understand that, after having mastered the rudiments of the drill and gone satisfactorily through a short period of probation as an ordinary private, I should be allowed to compete in the Mekteb Harbi (War School) for a second-lieutenancy, and, if successful, should be sent on active service to the probable seat of war. From what I heard I felt convinced that the education which I owed to my parents would enable me to pass the examination almost without preparation.

The treatment which I received in the barracks, of which I was an inmate for a fortnight, from both superiors and equals, was the kindest and most considerate imaginable. Strange as it may seem, I look back with pleasure on my residence in Selimié, which is an imposing, spacious building of modern construction, handsome architecture, and the most approved internal arrangements. The dormitories were all that could be desired as regards size, light, air, good order, ventilation, sanitation. The fact that, in spite of strict supervision, in spite of the existence of baths in almost all barracks,

and of the frequent ablutions commanded by the Koran, the Turkish soldier is not much given to cleanliness, is to the European a drawback to service in the Ottoman ranks. Another, graver objection decency forbids to speak of in detail. Those who have travelled in the East will readily understand that I allude to a fact which is, unfortunately, the outcome of the well-meant but ill-applied Mahomedan principle of chastity, and is a glaring instance how enforced abstinence in one direction will engender vice in another—a vice worse than that which the compulsory virtue was meant to counteract.⁶ The experience which causes me to make these observations lasted throughout the campaign. Having alluded to this unsavoury subject, I shall not refer to it again.

Selimié contained at the time several battalions of infantry and some batteries, in addition to the troops belonging to the Guards Corps, who were its permanent inhabitants. The whole of the officers up to the rank of major slept on the premises. I do not know how those few who were married managed domestic matters; I presume they had separate establishments for their families, to which they paid occasional flying visits. The officers of a company slept in one room. The service, although more arduous than in piping times of peace, was on the whole easy. The discipline was stringent, but not irksome, so far as the non-commissioned officers and men were concerned. The officers fumed under some silly restrictions; for instance, they were not allowed to visit places of public recreation like Kiathané.⁷

I applied myself zealously to the drill. In two days I had learnt the Turkish commands, and at the end of the fortnight I was as well trained as a private can expect to be in Turkey, where manœuvres, sham-fights, field-exercises *en masse*, camping-out (except in the numerous permanent camps, which were, by the way, exceedingly comfortable), cross-country marches, and all such exercises as can practically prepare for warfare, are (or were in 1877) totally unknown. Even target-practice took place only at rare intervals; there was none during my sojourn in Selimié, but a

few companies were ordered to a rifle-range beyond Pera, recently built, for shooting exercise. I was told that the Turkish private spends an average of hardly twelve cartridges a year in target-practice! Economy is the leading motive.

We had individual drill of bodies of half a dozen men under corporals or sergeants, exercises of squads of fifty men under lieutenants, and company drill, but no battalion exercises. Only on two occasions did we practise outside our own drill-ground.

My ample means and my supposed standing as an Englishman procured me instantly numerous friends and admirers among my brethren-in-arms. I used to purchase food outside and distribute the greater part of my daily ration, which consisted of two small loaves, a sufficiency of mutton, rice, butter, salt, oil, onions—all of very good quality except the butter; a candle, a piece of soap, and some wood and charcoal for the stoves. The water was good in Selimié, but shockingly bad—so I ascertained—in the barracks in Stamboul. When off duty I dined out. The corporal and the sergeant who had me in hand were courted with presents of tobacco and other gifts: but I never bribed with money.

A feature of the Turkish army administration is the system of committees. You make a trifling complaint, say, of the quality of the butter, and instantly the thing goes before a long-winded commission, who report thereon months later. There were half a dozen committees sitting daily, each occupied with half a dozen different subjects, sometimes of a ludicrously insignificant nature, matters which any corporal could have set right with a few words. Islam (or the Turkish Government, which is the same thing) dearly loves a small assembly of sluggardly wiseacres; it is the tomb wherein the Turks bury both airy trifles and matters of the gravest importance with admirable impartiality and never-varying result—which is *nil*.

I believe I looked well in my uniform; in any case, I was very vain, and fondly fancied that many passing pairs of lustrous eyes lingered lovingly upon me as I proudly paraded

the public places in my newborn glory as a Defender of the Faith.

According to instructions received, I took part in the morning and evening devotions, which practice I continued throughout the campaign. I did not enter the mosque. On Fridays the weekly parade was held before some thousands of gaping spectators.

In the barracks everyone talked of the war, prepared for it in his own small way, prophesied the result according to the light that was within him. The men were as enthusiastic and eager as the naturally apathetic Turk can be. The general tone and *morale* were good.

The officers of the company showed me much consideration and friendliness. I was frequently invited to their room, where they smoked my cigarettes and drank my coffee; the latter beloved commodity is not dealt out, except occasionally as an extra. They surpassed one another in singing the praises of Effendi Ingliz in particular, and the great British nation in general. The captain borrowed a lira (18s.), and swore eternal friendship.

The Turkish private, when off duty, does not salute officers in the street. Officers who do not know one another personally do not salute each other. The social standing of the Turkish officer is below that of the French, German, or Austrian. *Camaraderie* and *esprit de corps* are deficient.

To me the striking feature of Selimié was the absence of anything Oriental, save the devotions. The whole establishment, inside and out, building, arrangements, and routine, were strictly European. But for the language and the brown faces one might have imagined oneself in London, except that the building was infinitely finer than any barracks I have seen in England, and that the position was lovely and picturesque.

The tenor of life in Selimié pointed to a continuous feverish, and yet, on the whole, methodical preparation for war. I had the same impression throughout the country.

Battalions came and went, recruits were daily enrolled *en masse*, arms and stores were delivered and despatched, and there were constant inspections by superior officers.

The uniform of the Turkish infantry consists of a severely plain blue tunic, blue trousers tucked into the top-boots, a very serviceable and really good great-coat of grey or dark blue hue, with a hood, which is drawn over the head in inclement weather, and the well-known, becoming red fez with a black silk tassel.^s The facings and shoulder-straps are red in the infantry, green with the Chasseurs (Talliés). The latter (corresponding to the German Jaeger) are supposed to be sharpshooters and skirmishers; but there is little difference between their training and that of the ordinary infantry, except that each Chasseur battalion was supposed to have, but did not always possess, two light guns (system Whitworth), carried each by two packhorses.

The clothing was of good make and material, except the boots; these were execrable. I wore my own footgear.

The equipment consisted of a Martini-Peabody rifle and sword-bayonet.

The outfit for service consisted of a pouch for eighty cartridges, a water-bottle, and a large canvas haversack, which had to hold everything that the owner was desirous of taking with him. The Turkish soldier says, 'Omnia mea mecum porto,' and carries what he can conveniently stow in his bag and about his person.

The cavalry uniform is like that of the infantry (in a few regiments grey instead of blue), except the headgear, which consists of a cap of sheepskin, called kalpak. The armament is a heavy sword, Winchester repeating carbine, and revolver. Lances are carried only by regiments belonging to the Guards. Some regiments had still (in 1877) the Circassian sword (see below). The horses were bad, and their supply was insufficient.

The Circassian irregular horsemen wear the fantastic national costume with which illustrated papers have acquainted the reader. The cartridges are arranged on the

breast in bandoliers. They had the light guardless sword used by the Cossacks, and called 'charkha' by the latter; all had carbines, many also lances, revolvers, and knives. They were better mounted than the regulars.

The artillery uniform is more ornamental than that of the infantry. The blue tunic is braided hussar fashion, the belt being worn underneath it. The headgear is the orthodox fez. The equipment consists of cavalry sword and revolver. The guns were of modern Krupp manufacture. The horses left much to be desired, as regards both quality and numbers; often the live-stock of a battery was incomplete. There are six guns to the battery.⁹ The ammunition carts, of which there should be six to the battery, were often deficient.

The train consisted of light carts, two- or four-wheeled, adapted to the mostly execrable roads of the country and to transport across the Balkans, drawn by oxen more often than by horses, and of packhorses, for which mules were sometimes substituted. There were eighteen packhorses and two carts to the battalion, viz. two horses per company for the spare ammunition (eight companies to the battalion), two horses for the officers' luggage, and the carts for tents, cooking utensils, and tools. The train soldiers are called arabjis.¹⁰ An organised commissariat did not exist.

Of engineers I saw little or nothing. We had in Plevna a company of these, but most infantry battalions were their superiors in the art of military engineering.

Footgear excepted, nothing can be said against the clothing of the Osmanli soldier: it is good, plain, becoming, practical, serviceable, and inexpensive. But it has one grave drawback, which those in high places ignore obstinately: it offends national custom and prejudice; it is un-Turkish, save as regards the fez, labours under the stigma of being Frankish and Christian, and is disliked by the private. The popular, beloved Turkish costume, consisting of short, open, blue jacket, blouse, red sash, ample breeches, and shoes with laced gaiters, is now allowed only to the Zouave regiments

attached to the Guards Corps; in 1877 many infantry battalions were still clad in this dress. Nothing would be more insane than an attempted abolition of the fez in favour of pickelhaube or képi: it would lead to demoralisation, if no to revolution.

The weapons gave satisfaction in 1877, except the Winchester repeating carbine, against which frequent complaints were heard.

The organisation of the Turkish Army recognises three classes of troops: Nizamié (active army, Nizamié proper, and 1st reserve, *Ikhtihat*), Redif (corresponding to the German *Landwehr*), and Mustafiz (territorial army, corresponding to the German *Landsturm* and the French *Levée en masse*). This classification does not include the countless unorganised hordes of Kurds, Circassians, and other irregulars. Of the Mustafiz I saw next to nothing during the campaign; I believe it had, early in 1877, hardly any existence, except on paper, certainly no organisation. The Nizamié and Redif battalions were mixed indiscriminately in the constitution of the tactical regiments and brigades. The Redifs are called out in three stages or bans (*Mokadden*, *Tali*, and *Zalisé* respectively); the soldiers of these three bans are men who have served their time with the colours; that is, in the Nizamié. It is useless to speak of the periods and conditions of service in each grade and ban, as during those troubled times things were invariably quite different in practice to what they looked on paper. Since the war alterations and improvements have taken place in this direction.

There is general conscription in Turkey, to which every Mahomedan is subject. Liability to serve commences with the twentieth and ends with the fortieth year. Christians and Jews are not accepted as recruits, but have to pay a small tax for the privilege of exemption, which produced at that period an annual revenue of 600,000*l.* (sterling). Residents in Stamboul (with Galata and Skutari) are exempt from both service and tax; why, I do not know.¹¹ The registers of the Moslem population are kept with exactitude.

During the war Turkey put 750,000 men into the field. After the peace the Ottoman Army consisted of 250,000 men, *including* convalescents and returned prisoners and stragglers. Taking the figure of deserters and non-returned stragglers at 50,000, it follows that the appalling number of 450,000 men died in action, were permanently invalided, or succumbed to illness and exposure.

The following are the grades in the Turkish Army:—

Serdar ekrem (Commander-in-Chief).

Mushir (marshal), commanding ordu (army) or kol ordu (corps).

Ferik (general of division), commanding ferka (division).

Mirliva (brigadier), commanding liva (brigade).

Miralai (colonel), commanding alai (regiment).

Kaim-makam (lieutenant-colonel), adjutant to colonel.

Binbashi (major), commanding tabor (battalion).

Kol aghassi (major's adjutant).

Yüzbashi (captain), commanding boluk (company, squadron) or tabiya (battery).

Mulazım evvel (first-lieutenant).

Mulazım zani (second-lieutenant).

Mulazım zalise (third-lieutenant).

Bash chawush (head sergeant) ; one to every battalion.

Chawush (sergeant).

Onbashi (corporal).

Nefer (private).

The three grades, mushir, ferik, and mirliva, carry with them the title 'pasha,' and correspond to the pashas of three, two, and one tails respectively of olden times.

Miralais and kaim-makams have the title 'bey.'

The kaim-makam is supposed to be an auxiliary to the colonel; but most regiments had only one or the other of these officers, instead of both.

The duties of the kol aghassi and the bash chawush appeared to me to be somewhat enigmatical.

The grade of third-lieutenant is employed only in the engineers.

Remarkable features of the Ottoman Army are the constant non-payment—in war and peace alike—of the officers' wages, the forbearance and mildness with which this terrible drawback is borne, the undeniable fact that it does not influence the officers' *morale* and efficiency. The Turkish officer is resigned to, and cheerful under, what he considers a chronic and incurable evil; but in the higher grades men appropriate public money and accept bribes because they cannot get their salaries. The Harem-made pashas are the worst offenders. The notorious Mahmoud Damad is a shocking example of the petticoat-pasha.¹²

On paper the Empire is divided into six vilayetis (*i.e.* countries), which provide each an *ordu* (army), consisting of four *kol ordus* (corps). In reality, no vilayeti supplied in 1877 more than three corps, some only two, or one; the Bagdad vilayeti sent a single division, and that only towards the end of the campaign.

The *kol ordu* is supposed to consist of two divisions = four brigades = eight regiments = twenty-four battalions. There were no independent cavalry divisions; often there was no corps artillery. The actual subdivisions differed nearly always from those on paper.

The administrative and tactical unit is the battalion, not the regiment. For administrative purposes three battalions are formed into a regiment; but the tactical formation of a regiment was arbitrary, differed nearly always from the administrative one, and was often changed from one *ordre de bataille* to another. Thus the colonelcy had no real tactical value. The major was the fountain-head, the source, the authority. A British, German, or French private, speaking of 'the boss,' 'der Alte,' 'le patron,' would probably refer to the colonel; the Turkish soldier would mean the major.

The absence of any distinctive numeration of the regiments in 1877 was a grave inconvenience. Speaking of a

battalion, you would have to say 'Second Regiment of First Army, Battalion Redif No. 2.'

The army which Osman had in Plevna comprised battalions belonging administratively to half a dozen or more corps. It was the same with the other Turkish armies. Sometimes the three battalions of a (tactical) regiment would belong administratively to three different corps.

The words *bimbashi* (major), *yüzbashi* (captain), *onbashi* (corporal) mean, literally, 1,000 head, 100 head, 10 head respectively. Originally the battalion consisted of 1,000 men, divided into ten companies, the company being subdivided into ten squads. The war strength of the battalion was subsequently reduced to 800 men, divided into eight companies; I believe this alteration was one of the many reforms, of German origin, of the fourth decade of the present century.

In my experience, the full strength of 800 men to the battalion was never reached. Many battalions counted, even at the commencement of hostilities, only 400 to 500 men; the average strength was 600. This would give to the company the ridiculous figure of fifty to eighty men, a minimum fighting unit altogether out of keeping with modern tactical and strategical notions, and quite useless as compared to the Russian companies of 200 to 250 men each.

The evil had been recognised by the authorities, and the re-division of a few battalions into four companies of nominally 200, actually 150, men each had been made by way of trial. Since the war this sensible subdivision has been more generally introduced.

The old companies of (nominally) 100 men had two lieutenants, two corporals, and two sergeants each. The new companies of (nominally) 200 men had either three or four men of each of these grades. The number of non-commissioned officers was thus too small.

To conclude my remarks upon the Ottoman Army in general, I can sum up my experience of the efficiency and performances of the Turkish troops in 1877 as follows: The

artillery was splendid (despite the bad supply of horses), the infantry very good, the regular cavalry mediocre (apart from the fact that it was insufficient in numbers), the irregular, on the whole, useless. Train, commissariat, sanitary service, engineers, &c., were either absent altogether or bad. The supreme command was abominable. My experience of the Russians is that their infantry was very good, their artillery mediocre, their cavalry bad and useless, Cossacks excepted, who were excellent, save for their love of pillage and outrage.

The Turkish Army is, perhaps, the only one in the world which has invariably, and notably in the campaign under discussion, behaved better in the field than the peace conditions of both nation and army led critics to anticipate. The Russian Army, so far as the war of 1877-1878 is concerned, belongs undoubtedly to the category of armies which have not fulfilled expectations. The average Turkish soldier is, physically, morally, and intellectually, superior to the average Russian soldier, for three reasons: firstly, because he is a total abstainer; secondly, because he is religious, that is, intelligently religious, whereas the Russian is ignorantly religious (*i.e.* superstitious); thirdly, because elementary education is better in Turkey than in Russia. These plain facts should be borne in mind when the next campaign becomes imminent.¹³

On the first or second day of March I was instructed to present myself at the Mekteb Harbi (*i.e.* War School). I bade farewell to superiors and equals in Selimié, leaving behind gifts of tobacco, cigarettes, and coffee, and the memory of sundry unrepaid loans to brethren-in-arms.

The Mekteb Harbi is situated among fine surroundings in Pankaldi, north of Pera, one of the prettiest of Constantinople's suburbs. The Russian Church and hospital adjoin the establishment.

I exchanged my uniform for that worn by the pupils, and was accommodated in pleasant quarters on the premises, sharing a bedroom with ten well-behaved young men of my own age, all natives of European Turkey.

The school numbered 400 pupils and thirty instructors, of whom several were Germans, one an Austrian, one a Frenchman; most of the native teachers were military men.

There are three classes, each representing a one-year's course. Thus the term of a student's stay is three years.

After a brief conversation with some of the masters I was incorporated in the highest class, and was told that I could enter for the examination which would take place in a fortnight's time.

Each class is subdivided into two separate portions: candidates for infantry and candidates for cavalry. Attached to the establishment is a large riding-school for the cavalry pupils. Gunnery and military engineering are not taught in this college; there is a special school (*Muhendishané*) for these arts.¹⁴

My class counted eighty pupils: sixty for infantry and twenty for cavalry. The pupils of a class had their meals in common. The food was good and plentiful, mutton and rice being the staple comestibles. The internal arrangements were excellent. There was nothing to pay: the pupils are housed, fed, clad, and taught at the expense of the Government; they even receive, I believe, a small salary, although I got nothing. The entry is open to anyone with the necessary intellectual qualifications (these one can obtain gratis in a *rushdié*—military elementary school—and an *idadié*—military advanced school), independent of rank, standing, or parentage. This is only one of the countless evidences of Islam's thoroughpaced Socialism.

The pernicious and iniquitous system of entrance-fees to examinations is not known in Turkey.

The studies comprised Turkish language and literature, history, geography, French, tactics. Except in the first and last subjects, I was more advanced than any pupil present and than many of the masters. But I accumulated knowledge in a direction un contemplated by the preceptors—in the Turkish language, and more particularly in the art of reading the puzzling Arabic characters, especially the written

ones, a deficiency in which was the vulnerable point in my acquaintance with the idiom.¹⁵ Granted that they could teach me nothing but what I knew already in history, geography, French, yet each lesson made me more conversant with the language of the country of my temporary adoption.

Even in the geography and history of the Ottoman Empire I was better versed than my fellow-students.

Altogether, the standard of education aimed at in *Mekteb Harbi* was below that of a German 'höhere Bürgerschule' (school for the sons of the upper middle classes), although decidedly above that of a corresponding English institution.

As regards Turkish literature, it interested me very little, except in so far as it increased my vocabulary. It is in point of quantity immense, in point of quality worse than mediocre, consisting to the amount of 75 per cent. of translations and adaptations of Arabic, Persian, and European works. Grammar was taught, which proved of service to me.

In strategy, the Franco-German War of 1870-1871 was taken as an object-lesson by means of a work translated from the German. The subject was threshed out with much thoroughness. Unanswered query: Why was not one of the previous Russo-Turkish wars taken as a model?

There were also lessons—non-compulsory, I believe—in Arabic, Latin, German, from which I obtained dispensation: from Arabic, because I thought it unwise to commence a fresh study at that stage; from the other subjects, because I needed no teaching, at least not such as the masters of *Mekteb Harbi* could give me. At a later period I acquired the difficult Arabic language.

Fencing, shooting, and horsemanship were on the programme; but during my fortnight's sojourn these arts were not practised, probably because the examinations were so near. I heard that even at other times they are exercised by the infantry pupils only at rare intervals. I fenced privately with fellow-students, and practised revolver-shooting with my own weapon and cartridges. Surveying and kindred arts were ignored.

The lessons occupied five hours a day, my studies two hours more. In our spare time we boated, walked, or rode hired horses. At night we smoked, played chess and dominoes, and entertained each other with recitals, stories, and discussions. The moral tone of the establishment was high, higher than that of a German gymnasium (public school) or that of a corresponding English institution. I presume the reason of this lies in the fact that the teaching of the Koran is followed by the Moslems more generally, severely, and literally than that of the Bible is followed by the Christians. As in Selimié, no drinking of spirituous liquors took place, this being forbidden by Islam.

Here again I instantly made numerous friends. I treated my companions in the cafés, and provided cigarettes for almost the entire class.

The pupils were enthusiastic, patriotic, and eager to have their share of danger and glory in the coming struggle with the hated, treacherous Moskoffu. In religious matters they were tolerant and forbearing, more so than the privates in Selimié, who had often referred to me as a Kiafir or Ghiaur (unbeliever), possibly without meaning offence.

We had many interesting religious conversations. Islam acknowledges Jesus Christ as a prophet, but denies His divinity, and repudiates the theory of the Trinity, which—so the Moslems say—offends against the commandment, 'Thou shalt have none other gods but me.' 'But the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one,' said I. 'That is only a subterfuge,' was the reply.

Polygamy, concubinage, slavery, fatalism, and fanaticism are the dark contrasts to much that is beautiful, pure, and noble in Islam—sobriety, chastity, hospitality, commercial honesty, absence of slander, discipline, obedience, plain and regular living; but its gravest fault, which will one day, in my opinion, become fatal, is its pretended finality, which prevents it from keeping pace with progressive enlightenment, and forbids the attainment of humanitarian and ultra-religious ideals.

The discipline was moderately strict ; of course, less severe than in the barracks. We were compelled to keep certain hours of rising and turning in, to be punctual at meal-times, and to attend the classes ; otherwise we did as we liked.

The Turkish masters struck me as being less pedantic and more practical—though undoubtedly less well-informed—than their German colleagues. The latter took no special interest in me, possibly because I posed as an Englishman, and they did not know of my German birth. I have reason to believe that the frequent, much-vaunted German ‘missions’ (as they are arrogantly called) to Turkey, *i.e.* the engagement of bodies of German officers for the posts of organisers, instructors, &c., were nearly always failures in the end.¹⁶

The Governor was a venerable, apathetic *ferik*. He never addressed me individually.

I had hitherto refrained from calling on the persons (all Europeans) to whom I had letters of introduction, except a few whom I had visited immediately after my arrival. I now paid my respects, and although well received on the strength of the recommendations, I was regarded as a harmless lunatic in my desire to embrace a forlorn cause ; for, strangely at variance with the all-evident, newly roused patriotic spirit of the populace, many Franks considered the Turkish Empire as good as lost.

Some of my fellow-students, natives of Constantinople, introduced me into their homes. I was well received : was treated to cigarettes, sweetmeats, coffee ; was served by men-servants ; caught an occasional glimpse of girl-attendants, usually Circassians, and often very handsome,¹⁷ but did not see the ladies of the house, except on one occasion, when a fat, waddling, elderly wife sorely disappointed my expectations. She was, however, affable and effusive, seemed to be well-informed, spoke French, knew Eugène Sue by heart, and was evidently that *rara avis*, the Turkish equivalent for the emancipated woman of the Occident. She looked upon an Englishman as a demigod, and had the goodness to call me a ‘handsome boy.’ When I consult the mirror now I

am inclined to think she must have been mad. Generally, when a Turk called me a pretty name the compliment was followed by a request for the loan or gift of something. She did not beg or borrow, but she took something forcibly—a kiss. Alocs were not in it for the bitterness of that salute!

About the middle of March one-half of the sixty pupils of the infantry portion of my class went up for their examination. Two or three were debarred, owing to some offence against discipline. The process occupied a week; but I was taken in hand on the first day, and passed with credit to myself. The affair looked to me more like a matter of form than like a genuine inquiry into my abilities. My examination in half a dozen subjects lasted forty minutes, and was oral, except one short translation from Turkish to French. Nearly all the masters of the establishment, and several officers and officials from the Staff and the War Office, were present, but only three or four took an active part in the procedure. The pasha who was then director of all the military colleges presided, seconded by the Governor of Mekteb Harbi.

The silly system of marking in examinations is not known in Turkey. As in Germany, a candidate's knowledge of a given subject was either sufficient or insufficient; if the former, he passed in the subject, if the latter, he did not. That is sound logic, and is sensible, simple, practical, and workable.¹⁸

I stayed in the school whilst the examination lasted, and for three days longer, as a supernumerary. Six or eight pupils (rank duffers) did not pass; they were remanded for another course.

On the day after the closing examination I received my commission as *mulazim zani* in the service of his Sultanic Majesty. I celebrated the event the next night by a dinner given in a dingy English restaurant in Galata to the successful candidates. I invited the major of my old battalion in Selimié and the officers of my former company, who came, all but the lieutenant on duty. The major ate to

bursting-point, and his smoking of my cigars filled me with secret alarm : he must have chewed and swallowed them, so quickly did they disappear. However, he was as lively as a kitten after the fray.

On the following day six of us full-blown lieutenants received orders to proceed to Daüd Pasha Cavalry Barracks, on the western outskirts of Stamboul, outside the city walls, near which there was a permanent camp containing 5,000 infantrymen.¹⁹

I took leave of my remaining colleagues—ten or twelve of whom were ordered elsewhere on the same day, two being selected to prepare for the General Staff—distributed nicotine souvenirs among teachers and pupils, and bakshish among the servants, shouldered my baggage, and walked with my friends to our destination.

We reported ourselves to the Governor, a brigadier, received our uniform, arms, and outfit, and were told off to our stations in the camp, the barracks being overcrowded. All this was done within a few hours.

This astonishing promptness and the really admirable general activity of those days were, of course, exceptional, and caused by the political outlook. Under ordinary circumstances, I was told, weeks would elapse between the examinations and the arrival of the officers' commissions, and again weeks would pass before the lieutenants received appointments. The War of 1877 has shown that corrupt, cancerous, comatose Ottoman officialdom can rouse itself once in a while to grand exertion.

To my regret I lost sight of my companions. I alone was sent to Widdin, they being destined for Rasgrad and Rustchuk, and two for Erzerum, in Asia.

The order to proceed to Widdin reached me the same evening, to my intense satisfaction ; for was not the redoubtable Osman Pasha, the hope of the Ottoman nation, the hero of last year's campaign, the commander of the Widdin army ?

I slept that night in a comfortable tent, in company with

eight or ten mulazims, most of whom left next day for different destinations.

My arms consisted of a home-made sword of good quality and a six-chamber revolver of German manufacture with 100 cartridges. I had also my own revolver, and my field-glass, which was of great service to me throughout the campaign. My uniform differed little from that of the privates. I had a haversack for the necessaries and a small valise—to be carried on a packhorse—for my personal luggage. My empty portmanteau I had to leave behind.

As I was an inmate of the camp for barely twenty-four hours, I had no opportunity of making exhaustive observations; neither is it needful to describe a place which differed in nowise from others that I saw subsequently, and shall mention in their proper place.

In accordance with orders I was up next morning (March 27) at daybreak, and presented myself at barracks, where a colonel gave me detailed instructions. I returned to camp and took over from a major a detachment of 180 men—150 young recruits, Nizams, and thirty Redifs of the second ban, destined to supplement Osman's battalions, which had suffered considerably in Servia, and had not as yet received reinforcements. Two mulazims younger than myself—one a mere boy, but painstaking, and anxious to please, the other a Frank, to judge by his complexion—a middle-aged, melancholy sergeant, and two corporals, were placed under my orders.

Thus I had at once an independent task allotted to me. What a difference!—three months ago the junior of an office of juniors, dusting desks and fetching beer: now in active command of 180 men, with trying duties to fulfil and puzzling instructions to carry out! The grave responsibility suddenly (and unexpectedly, I confess) thrust upon me caused me some anxious moments; but I made a resolution to act honourably towards my self-chosen country and sovereign at any cost to myself, even that of my life. 'Fulgura frango' said I, as my ancestors have said before me.

My instructions were : first, to hold an inspection, and see that each man's equipment was complete ; secondly, to make out a list of the names, to be used for daily muster ; thirdly, to proceed to Yedi Kulé (*i.e.* Seven Towers), a suburban station, in the extreme south-west of Stamboul, of the Bellova Railway, entrain by the regular train leaving at seven that evening, and proceed to Bellova, the (then) terminus, without stopping at intermediate stations (of which Adrianople and Philippopolis are the principal ones),²⁰ except for the train connections ; fourthly, to place myself and my detachment in Bellova at the disposal of a brigadier, and to follow his instructions for the continuance of the journey, on foot, to Widdin ; fifthly, to consider my command as at an end in Bellova, unless the said brigadier chose to renew it, in which case it would terminate in Widdin ; sixthly, on my arrival in Widdin to place myself at the disposal of Mushir Osman Pasha or his representative.

I was given a map (made in Germany), a page torn from a Continental Bradshaw showing the railway time-table, a written synopsis of my orders, an authority enabling me to obtain supplies and assistance from every officer and official in His Majesty's service, and three liras (54s.).

I think the name of the brigadier was Pardo Pasha ; in any case I shall term him thus, having occasion to mention him again.

The inspection was soon over. Only trifling articles were missing, and these I obtained in camp.

Each man carried eighty cartridges, but we had no spare ammunition and no train.

In making out the list—an irksome and tedious task—I was assisted by the mulazims and the sergeant. The older of the former I discovered, to my intense gratification, to be an Englishman of the name of Seymour, who will figure much in these pages, and of whom I shall speak at length in the next chapter. The younger mulazim was called Tereb. Both he and Seymour had passed the Mekteb Harbi

examination previous to my entering the school. The sergeant's name was Sefi; he hailed from Syria.

The troublesome part of such a list is, next to the fact that most of the vowels are not written, and must therefore be committed to memory or guessed, the constant recurrence of the same names and the frequent absence of distinguishing family names, in which case it was the custom to affix the name of the town whence the soldier hailed. Men from Arabic-speaking provinces attach the father's name; often the profession is added. Sometimes a man would gravely give all these things, and half a dozen titles as well, in one long string. I remember a pompous Redifman from Mesopotamia giving his name somewhat in the following fashion: Haji Aga Ahmed Ali Dedashti bin Haji Aga Mustaffa Abdullah Dellal Baghdadi Malektijar.²¹ This man I called 'Malek,' much to the soldiers' delight; for the Turkish word malek means angel (he was as ugly as a prize-gorilla), whilst the same Arabic word means king; they nicknamed him promptly shitan (devil), which appellation clung to him. Seymour and I ascertained subsequently that the men called us 'Jim,' possibly because one or the other had heard of the English name James and its abbreviation, and, it corresponding to the letter Jim (ج) of the Turkish alphabet, the monosyllable was easily remembered. We were distinguished as Jim evvel and Jim zani, *i.e.* Jim the first and Jim the second, so we discovered. Verbal communication was easy, the men being addressed by single short names: Selim, Ali, Hassan, Said, Murad, &c.

The list was finished at noon. We had dinner—the eternal mutton and rice—were given a day's supply of biscuits, filled our flasks with water, and started in good time for Yedi Kulé, hailed by the acclamations of the troops, who wished us God-speed. You may imagine with what conceit I gave out my first commands.

I should have been sorely puzzled to find the way, having never before been in this quarter of the globe, had not Sergeant Sefi been acquainted with the locality. The march

occupied two hours. It did not rain, although it looked threatening. The air was mild and damp. I had to carry my valise knapsack fashion.

At Yedi Kulé I had an interview with the stationmaster, whilst the men sat or squatted on the platform. Having heard that soldiers had lately been forwarded in open cattle-trucks, I asked for three passenger-cars. The rascal, probably with a view of obtaining bakshish from a greenhorn, undertook to telegraph to the terminus; but Sefi told me afterwards that he had undoubtedly had previous instructions, and taken measures accordingly. However, in return for my bakshish I got some valuable information as to the line and the journey.²²

The Turkish official will sell his soul for a few piastres (called grush by the natives, 100 to the lira); but then, the poor devil does not always get his salary. But I am the more ashamed of the stationmaster of Yedi Kulé as I suspect he was a Frank, German, Austrian or English—I do not know which, for he spoke Turkish to me, and would not respond to my polyglot trial inquiries; moreover, I believe he was not in the service of the Government, but in that of a company, who presumably paid him regularly.

We had to wait nearly two hours. A crowd of curious spectators was soon on the spot, among them many (veiled) women and mischievous children. The Turk loves his file of soldiers quite as dearly as the Berliner does, and the girls have as great (if silent and passive) an admiration for the Osmanli Tommy Atkins as any Cockney nursemaid has for the ornamental soldiers in Hyde Park, or any Kensington cook for the harmless, necessary Moral Miracle in Blue.

Some benevolent residents of the neighbourhood clubbed together and got us coffee, which was very welcome. Several men distributed their tobacco. A mediæval-looking, grotesque Galician Jew residing in the vicinity spotted Seymour and me, and brought us a flask of terribly strong spirits and a huge packet of garlic-reeking sandwiches. This simple

act of kindness reconciled me somewhat to the Rosenkranz tribe.

When the train was signalled I had the men drawn up in double file, and divided them into three squads, each under a lieutenant, assisted by a non-commissioned officer. Sergeant Sefi was with me.

The men were cheerful and obedient. As, with a few exceptions, they were not natives of Stamboul, distressing leave-taking was reduced to a minimum.

There were three cars reserved for us; each accommodated, with some crowding, one of the squads. Discomfort notwithstanding, we were in high spirits.

As the train steamed out of the station the populace shouted a brief, vigorous, healthy 'Allah' by way of good-bye. I mentally bade farewell to Stamboul, which, indeed, I have not seen since. And thus I embarked upon my career as officer in the service of the Sublime Porte.



CHAPTER III

FROM CONSTANTINOPLE TO WIDDIN : THREE WEEKS ON
THE TRAMP

MARCH 27 TO APRIL 23, 1877

THE train passed the now historical San Stefano, where peace was signed on March 3, 1878,²³ and pulled up at 7.30 in Kütchük (Little) Chekmedjé, twelve miles west of Constantinople. Here our three cars were detached and shunted to a siding, ready to be joined next morning to the Adrianople through train.²⁴

Thanks to the zeal of an innkeeper (who received my acknowledgments for his supplies, but no money) and to the patriotism of prominent citizens, the men had supper of bread, cakes, and coffee, whilst the Austrian stationmaster placed his room at the disposal of us three officers—a hot meal being sent us from the khan (inn). I refused to grant leave of absence, and at nine the men turned in. They slept on sacking provided by the railway officials, with their haversacks for pillows and covered with their great-coats, on the floor of an empty carriage-shed, where a fire had been lighted, for it was damp and chilly. After having held muster, I placed the detachment under Sergeant Sefi, and went for a stroll, in a drizzling rain, accompanied by Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb. At the khan we bespoke breakfast.

As I saw Kütchük Chekmedjé only during darkness, I am not competent to pass judgment on the place, which, moreover, deserves no description, having no importance save that attached to the station. It counts 4,000 inhabitants, mostly Turks, and is prettily situated on a narrow strip of ground

bordered by the Sea of Marmora on the south and a lake on the north.

At ten we turned in, and sat for an hour around the stove in the station office, talking and smoking. As my companions were my friends, and co-sharers of good and evil throughout the campaign until death parted us, I shall briefly introduce them. They sleep under the soil of Plevna's blood-soaked hills, in company with 30,000 other victims of Russia's furious onslaughts and Osman's heroic defence. When the last great muster is called, I hope they and I will respond together, and stand once more shoulder to shoulder, as we did in many a bloody fray.

Jack Seymour's antecedents were sad and troubled. It was only at a later period that I learnt the terrible secret of his birth: he was his mother's illegitimate and pre-nuptial child. The well-to-do merchant who, after his birth, became his mother's husband, was not his father. The marriage was an unhappy one; but husband and wife lived together, and Jack with them, owing to their desire to avoid scandal. Jack was grateful to his stepfather for the education he had given to him, but he had no affection for him; all the more deeply was he attached to his mother. He was a Cockney. In 1870, when he was eleven years old, the family had left London for Gallipoli, where the father's firm had a branch establishment. Here they had resided until September 1876, when they returned to England, Jack excepted, who was then in the *Mekteb Harbi*. He spoke Turkish like a native. The religious difficulties of his entry into the Ottoman Army were overcome in his case more easily than in mine, owing to the stepfather's local and personal influence. He had chosen the career of a soldier in conformity with his inclinations; he had passed the *Mekteb Harbi* in October 1876, and had since been attached in *Tash Kishla* Barracks, in Constantinople, as *kiatib* (clerk) to a major, afterwards as *yaver* (aide-de-camp) to a *ferik*. Why I was placed above him, then, as well as later in *Widdin*, I do not know, as he was six months my senior in point of service: but seniority counts for nothing

in the Turkish Army, and I was a month older than he. In any case, I had no hand in the arrangement, and he accepted it without grumbling or questioning its propriety. He was of average height, slim, with a handsome boyish face and bright grey eyes. His fighting-weight was 9 stone 4 lb. He was full of dash, as brave as a lion, as true as steel, and a staunch and loyal friend.

Ibrahim Tereb hailed from Dédé Agach, a port on the Ægean Sea and terminus of a branch line from Adrianople, where his father was an influential and respected Government official. He had passed the Mekteb Harbi on the same day as Jack, and had been selected to train for the General Staff in the Erkiani Harb Mektebi, where he had stayed until a week previous to our meeting, when he had been politely informed that he was not suited for a General Staff officer, and had been sent to the Daüd Pasha camp. I suppose he was not considered sufficiently bright. It was a sore point with the poor boy; whenever it was referred to he flew into a violent passion. It goes without saying that he was teased unmercifully with this mishap. He was an inch shorter, but stouter, than Jack and I (who were nearly alike in height and weight), and had typical Turkish features, with magnificent black eyes and the much-cultivated attempt at a moustache, which formed the constantly irritating object of Jack's and my envy, our faces being as smooth as any girl's. In the absence of cosmetics he used to grease his upper lip with mutton-fat at night; when there was no fat, with a candle-stump. He was a splendid swordsman. His courage, prowess, zeal, and powers of endurance left nothing to be desired. He was an enthusiastic, romantic, and earnest young fellow, and had some extremely high notions as regards religion, morality, friendship, love, marriage, and so forth. In Dédé Agach he had met, some years before, the daughter of a Scotch railway engineer, whom he loved, unknown to her, with all the fervour of his youthful and incorrupt heart. Her name, Mary, was constantly on his lips. I presume it was her nationality which caused him to become deeply,

almost childishly, attached to Jack and me. He spoke a little English; in any case, he knew how to say, 'Tell me, Mary, how to woo thee.'

Being engaged in personalities, I shall seize this opportunity of saying a word with respect to Sergeant Sefi. This man had a history—which I learnt on the following day—as curious as any I ever heard. I reproduce it as he gave it to me, without vouchsafing its truth. He was an Englishman by birth (of this I am certain, as I could judge by the accent), and had held a high position in a town in Syria, having finally become British Consul. While holding this position he had been mixed up in a financial scandal, and had been obliged, ten or twelve years before, to fly in order to escape arrest, leaving wife and child behind; these he never saw again, for a year later they fell victims to the cholera. His perfect knowledge of both Turkish and Arabic and his sun-tanned face enabled him to pass as a Moslem; I, for one, was thunderstruck when he disclosed himself to me as an Englishman. He had enlisted, had risen to the rank of sergeant, and had fought in Servia. We separated in Widdin, whence he was sent to Rahova, and I have not seen him again; but I had a letter from him later in Kharkoff, written in Odessa, giving an account of his campaigning adventures, and stating that he had been promoted to the rank of bash chawush, and had been taken prisoner after the battle of Shainovo (Shipka), January 9, 1878; my address in Kharkoff he had obtained from a German railway official in the Russian service. I have not heard from him again.

At five next morning (March 28) we were up. I held muster, and sent the men to the khan for breakfast, which consisted of coffee and newly baked bread. The day was threatening and oppressive; later it became intolerably close, and showers fell at intervals. Some residents dealt out homemade cakes and tobacco. Jack, Ibrahim, and I stood apart whilst the distribution was in progress, as our rank forbade our sharing in it; but a veiled girl came up to us with her father, and offered to each of us a packet of fine cigarettes and

some cakes. We saluted and thanked her ; Jack seized her hand and kissed it, with more fervour than it was wise or necessary to display. But the grizzly old Turk only laughed, as if to say, 'Boys will be boys.' Encouraged by Jack's successful boldness I, too, kissed her pretty hand ; but when Tereb proceeded to follow suit the old man marched his girl off, and poor Ibrahim, who looked very sheepish, got nothing but a hearty laugh for his abortive gallantry.

At eight the train, consisting, besides the carriages for the ordinary traffic, of a dozen cars filled with soldiers, drawn by two engines, steamed into the station, and there was much commotion : for a lot of the men jumped out. I spotted a major, and drew his attention to the khan ; he sent some of his men, who returned with the host's remaining stock of bread. Meanwhile our three cars were attached ; we took our places, I counted the men, and off we went, exchanging farewells with those on the platform.

Considerations of space preclude me from describing the beautiful scenery through which we passed.²⁵ We arrived in Adrianople at eight that night, after a twelve hours' journey which, if devoid of mishaps, was full of discomfort ; for I was in the last carriage, was severely shaken, cramped almost into spasms, squeezed almost into nothing. We had no regular meals : our biscuits, cakes, water, and occasional doles from charitably inclined persons on the platforms, were our sustenance. There was an hour's delay in one station—I think it was Liulé Burgas ; but nothing was to be had there save coffee and milk. From this place we telegraphed to the Military Governor of Adrianople, asking for night-quarters, supper, and breakfast for 900 men.

In Adrianople we had twelve hours to wait for the departure of the Bellova train. We were met by a corporal, who marched us through the ill-lighted, muddy streets to the barracks, where things had been made comfortable : fires were burning in the stoves—it had turned cold at dusk—and a hot supper, consisting of mutton and rice boiled together, a goodly portion for each man, with two loaves

per head, had been prepared. Biscuits were dealt out for the morrow's journey.

The barracks were full, and there was no bed accommodation for us, it having been the commander's intention to send us to the camp outside the town; but rain had set in, and we were allowed to remain, our 900 men sleeping, as best they could, on the floors of the corridors, dormitories, stables, and outhouses, wrapped up in their great-coats, with one blanket per man to lie on. These blankets, new and of good quality, were dealt out from the stores, and the men were told to retain them; they came in very handy during our tramp to Widdin, but were inconvenient to carry, being rather too large for the haversacks; most men wore them, like the great-coats when not in use, rolled up, and fastened with cord sash-wise around the body.

My 180 men were accommodated in a large outlying hall, used for drill in bad weather. I called the roll, saw them settled in their sleeping-places on the sand-covered floor, and left them in charge of Sergeant Sefi.

The 700 men who had joined us in Kütchük Chekmedjé were commanded by a major. Not being under the latter's orders (on the contrary, I had been told that my command was an independent one), I had really nothing to do with him; but he suggested that I should place myself under him for the rest of the journey to Bellova, as it would facilitate railway and food arrangements; which I did, after consulting Seymour and Tereb.

Jack and I accompanied the major, two of his lieutenants, and an officer of the garrison to the station, where seventeen cars were bespoken for the next morning. Then we called at the private house of the Governor, to whom the major and I were in duty bound to report ourselves. He had gone to bed, so we left our names with a servant. It rained hard, and I saw Adrianople, therefore, under unfavourable conditions, apart from the darkness; this may account for the fact that the city appeared to me remarkably dirty, dingy, and miserable.

On our return to barracks we were invited to a mess-room used by the local officers in common ; here we had coffee and tobacco, and spent a social hour. Much consideration was shown to Jack and me by the hospitable Adrianople men : Tereb also, as well as the major and his subordinates (he had two captains and ten lieutenants under him), came in for a share of the goodly things, of the warmth diffused by the stove, of the friendliness of our hosts. We were envied for our orders to proceed to Widdin, whither also the major and his force were bound.

Jack, Ibrahim, I, and three lieutenants from the major's detachment slept, on two beds and a couch evacuated by our amiable hosts, in one of the officers' bedrooms.

The Adrianople Barracks struck me as being inferior to Selimié and Daüd Pasha (also to Tash Kishla, so Jack said) in everything—building, size, arrangements, good condition, and sanitary matters. I have it on the authority of competent persons, that whilst the barracks of the capital are excellent, those of the provinces are bad.

We turned in after midnight, and were up again at six, (March 29), amid indescribable bustle ; for the building held three times its allotted number of men. Breakfast consisted of coffee and bread. Muster was held, the flasks were refilled, and off we marched, after having taken a hearty farewell of our kindly hosts. It had cleared, the sun shone brilliantly, and soon it grew quite warm. The filth in the streets was awful ; but the sunlight made things look bright and cheerful.

The thoroughfares of Adrianople, if narrow and ill-built to Western notions, are extremely picturesque.

In the station there was a large concourse of inhabitants, the report of our departure to the probable seat of war having spread through the town. Again we came in for voluntary distributions of bread, cakes, sweets, oranges, dates, tobacco, and cigarettes. Some Christian Bulgarians were going by train, and were the object of violent manifestations of hatred and rage on the part of the Turkish civilians. They sheltered

themselves behind the soldiers, who, whilst looking daggers at them, obeyed the major's orders and protected them against ill-usage.

There was less crowding in the train than on the previous day, as we had an extra car for the men and a first-class carriage for the officers. I detached twenty men from my three squads, and placed them temporarily under one of the major's corporals. The train, consisting of thirty cars, was divided into two portions, each drawn by two engines.

The populace gave us an enthusiastic farewell. It was nearly ten before we started.

The scenery, beautiful throughout, grew more hilly as we progressed; but two or three stations before Philippopolis it became flat, with a view of mountain-ranges on the horizon. We had only short stoppages until, at seven in the evening, we reached Philippopolis. The major had sent a telegraphic request for supper to this town, and another for quarters to Bellova. The meal, consisting of boiled rice, ready served in enamelled tin dishes and piping hot, with two loaves per head, had been sent from the barracks to the station on carts, in charge of local soldiers; it was consumed by the men on the platform, in the waiting-rooms and offices, and in the adjoining sheds. Perfect order and good temper prevailed: there was no crowding and pushing, no greediness, and no unseemly haste. Bonfires were burning in different places, for the lighting arrangements of the station were of a primitive description. It was an animated and picturesque scene. I found it hard to realise that we were as yet in perfect peace, for the ugly word 'war' was writ large on every fierce Tartar countenance, and appeared in every detail of the weird and romantic surroundings.

I saw nothing of Philippopolis except the station, and that only in the growing darkness, therefore I am not in a position to give a description of this important city.

Here again there was a large assembly of enthusiastic and charitable spectators, and once more our Christian fellow-

travellers, some of whom alighted, as well as the Bulgarians in the crowd, came in for a good deal of ill-feeling.

The officers of the garrison arrived to greet us, brought us cigarettes, and had coffee made on one of the fires. We squatted around it, chatting and laughing, in the highest of spirits; and thus, still at peace with all the world, I had a foretaste of camp-life.

The sky was overcast and threatening.

After an hour's stoppage we proceeded on our journey. The night withdrew the details of the scenery from my vision; but I noticed, as we approached our destination, that it was weird and desolate. We had two short stoppages, the first of which was at Tatar Bazardjik, one of the hotbeds of last year's rebellion; and at half-past ten we arrived in Bellova, which is a village of under 1,000 inhabitants (of whom a third are Christians), on the Maritza, amid magnificent forests; at the present time it is an insignificant intermediary station on the Great Balkan Line, then it was the all-important terminus.²⁶

In the dark, ill-built station I dissolved my connection with the major, owing to a difference of opinion between us, though with good temper on either side; he preferred to march with his men to the camp, half an hour's walk, relying upon the telegram he had sent; I chose to remain in the station till daybreak, for it looked threatening, the roads (so I was told) were in an awful condition, and I was by no means certain as to the accommodation we should find in the already crowded camp. In deciding thus I acted upon the advice of a friendly German railway engineer.²⁷ Here in the station we had in any case a roof overhead, as there were numerous sheds for carriages, tools, stores, &c.; besides, the cars afforded shelter. Had I been placed under the major's orders I should have had no voice in the matter; but having expressly been told to proceed to Bellova independently of any detachments I might meet on the road, I was correct in acting on my own discretion.

I parted from the major and his officers with perfect

friendliness, and watched the column march out into the dark, boisterous night, some railwaymen with lanterns acting as guides. Soon it began to rain; but I learnt afterwards that the troops escaped the deluge which came down at midnight, although the crowding in the tents was terrible.

We were under shelter when the storm commenced. Having held muster and seen my men safely housed, Jack, Ibrahim, and I nibbled some biscuits, drank the Jew's brandy diluted with water (of this compound the Turk did not partake), and, huddling together on the floor, were soon asleep, despite the howling wind and the terrific rain, which almost beat in the roof of the roughly built shed. Ibrahim had proposed that we should utilise the first-class carriage which had brought us hither; but having ascertained that it had been shunted to a place at some distance, I considered it wiser to remain close to my men, and fairer to share their discomfort than to indulge in cushioned couches whilst they slept on bare boards.

I had appointed seven as the time of rising. When we got up (March 30) the sun was shining in all its glory, displaying to our view a landscape of extreme beauty. The wind was still very high, and continued so for some days, which had the effect of drying the roads. From this moment till September we had almost invariably fine weather.

The scenery around Bellova is magnificent. The village lies at the northern foot of the wild Rhodopé mountain-range, of which the highest summits, 8,000 feet above sea-level, are twenty miles to the south-west. North of the town the southern slopes of the Balkans rise from the banks of the Maritza. Bellova thus forms the extreme western point of the Maritza plain, the point in which the northern and southern mountain-ranges (Balkan and Rhodopé) meet at an acute angle.

The Rhodopé Mountains (called Dospad Dagħ by the Turks) are, next to the grandeur and wildness of the scenery, remarkable for two things: they are (or were in 1877 and

up to a few years ago) infested with robbers, and they contain a number of monasteries, built upon the most unlikely looking spots—places which, seen from the roads, appear unapproachable to any but the eagles who share the rocks and crags with the monks as dwelling-places.

We breakfasted off biscuits and water: there was nothing else to be had. I left the detachment in charge of Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb, with instructions to make the men look smart, so that we might creditably pass the brigadier's inspection, and walked along the high-road to the camp, which was close to the village, two miles west of the station. Here I reported myself to Pardo Pasha.

The camp held 1,000 men (not counting the major's 700), most of them under canvas; there were also some roughly built sheds for stores, carts, and four heavy batteries, but no cavalry, except a detachment of Circassians, who struck me as being remarkably ugly and repulsive.²⁸ Fresh sheds were in course of erection, timber being plentiful in the neighbourhood, and there being at that time a number of workmen in Bellova, many of them foreigners.

The brigadier instructed me to remain in the station with my detachment, in order to supervise and assist in the unloading and housing of stores. He expected another 1,000 infantry, as well as a large train, the former from Constantinople, the latter from Philippopolis. After their arrival we were to start for Sofia, where detachments would join us.

I went back to my men, and took them to camp, where the brigadier inspected them. The ordinary daily ration of mutton, rice, and bread was dealt out to us. We marched back, taking with us handcarts with 1,000 biscuit rations, as well as soap, candles, matches, oil and salt. I had dinner prepared, selecting those men as cooks who professed to be able to fulfil this important duty. On the whole they acquitted themselves creditably.

The brigadier had informed me that he had decided to leave me in command (to terminate in Widdin) of my de-

tachment ; for which compliment I expressed my gratitude. Twenty Redifmen with one corporal, who had arrived by themselves on foot from Saloniki a few days before, were added to my command, so that I had now 200 men, four non-commissioned officers, and two lieutenants under me. These formed a march company—*i.e.* a temporary or scratch company.

There was a large stock of every necessary in Bellova, but the accommodation for storing was bad and insufficient.

I must mention the staple article of food of the district, of which specimens were frequently dealt out among us by the amiable shepherds of the mountain-slopes : cheese made of ewe's milk, called kashkaval. It smells like a much-deceased cat, and tastes like a tallow-candle. Next to highway robbery, the manufacture of kashkaval was the most important industry of the forest inhabitants around Bellova.

With the consent of the stationmaster, I appropriated a shed sufficiently large to afford accommodation to all my men, and a smaller building for my company's carts and stores. Several new sheds, for the train expected to arrive, were commenced by the railway workmen. We three lieutenants utilised an empty cottage in the village of Simtchina, half a mile south-west of the station ; it had belonged to a Bulgarian who, the year before, had distinguished himself in a Christian onslaught on the Turkish residents, and had later been butchered, with wife and family, by the infuriated Moslems. The kindly inhabitants of Simtchina lent us furniture and bedding, and we made one room of the tiny, pretty dwelling quite homely and comfortable.

With these arrangements the day was spent. Supper consisted of biscuits, and milk bought in Simtchina, a quarter of a pint per head. Good spring water was plentiful in the vicinity. I made the men turn in at nine, except Sergeant Sefi and a dozen Redifs, who were detailed to give assistance on the arrival of the train. This brought only a small detachment—fifty men, under a lieutenant—but a large quantity of

stores, which were housed in and near the station. The new arrivals slept in one of the sheds, the lieutenant, at our invitation, in the cottage. A notability of the village sent coffee, pipes, and tobacco for us four officers, and Jack bribed a charming Bulgarian girl, with more kisses than piastres, to tidy up. The improvised sign-and-finger language by means of which they conducted their conversation was enough to make a corpse smile.

Next day (March 31), in camp, a colonel, Mahomed Hussein Bey by name, gave me detailed instructions as to the preparations for our journey. A march expected to last for some weeks is a serious affair, and it is of the utmost importance that the preparations be made in a methodical and exhaustive manner.

Firstly, there was a medical inspection of the men on the part of a surgeon attached to Pardo Pasha's staff, who was assisted by some doctors (civilians) from Philippopolis.²⁹ Four of the Saloniki Redifmen were found to suffer from soreness of the feet, and were told to remain behind, much to their disgust. I absolved them from any but the lightest duties, had an ointment made of mutton-fat, borrowed slippers from the inhabitants, and two men recovered sufficiently to join us after all; the other two, together with fifty men and two corporals from the camp, under a lieutenant, all suffering slightly from something or other, were formed into a 'company of weaklings,' and were commanded to take charge of the empty camp after our departure, and assist the railwaymen in unloading the stores which were expected to arrive.

Secondly, there was an inspection of footgear by me, assisted by Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb and Sergeant Sefi. I knew nothing about boots, except how to wear them; but necessity teaches better than theoretical training. Most of the men had been but recently provided with clothing; I had, therefore, only a dozen pairs to throw out, which were replaced out of a large supply just arrived from Philippopolis. The quality of the footgear was bad.

Thirdly, the great-coats underwent a thorough examination. Here I had reason to be dissatisfied with the Redifs from Saloniki, who had ill-used their clothing during their tramp, so that I had to get them fresh coats. By the way, these men had been destined for Sofia, but had gone to Bellova through mistaking their directions.

Fourthly, to each man were given two pairs of woollen socks, a large cotton handkerchief, a towel, and a thick muffler—for the nights were chilly, and there was snow on the summits of the Rhodopé and the Balkans.

These preparations lasted several days. In the meantime our ordinary duties went on as usual: we marched to camp in the morning with our carts, leaving sentries in charge of the stores, took over our day's rations, marched back, cooked dinner, had twice daily ablutions in a tributary of the Maritza, and an occasional bath in the Maritza itself, a mile distant, washed our underclothing in turns, and at night a detachment assisted in unloading the train.

Stores and troops arrived daily: infantry, a light horse-battery, an ordinary battery, a squadron of regulars, a detachment of workmen—mechanics and engineers. Special trains brought some hundreds of packhorses; the housing of these caused much trouble and anxious consideration. Special local trains from Tatar Bazardjik brought meat, grain, vegetables, forage. Carts and waggons of the latter commodity arrived hourly from the surrounding villages. The greatest bother was caused by herds of sheep and oxen for our sustenance; the confusion was terrible. Light vehicles were requisitioned in the farms and villages, the owners receiving acknowledgments. Consignments of horseshoes came from Adrianople; cases of small-arms from Constantinople, and two iron boxes with money in charge of an officer and two privates. I received five liras against expenses from Pardo Pasha's aide-de-camp, after having rendered an account for the three liras which had been paid to me in Constantinople. Ammunition supplies were troublesome, as they required special care in housing and extra sentries. Drugs and

medicine came from Philippopolis. One of the civilian doctors gave us each a compound to swallow, by order of the *mirliva*, which made ill those who had been well, and nearly killed those who had been unwell. I used to concoct medicines of my own, and the men began to have confidence in my remedies; the drugs I got from the German railway engineer's private stock, and the prescriptions from a little volume which he gave me.

Altogether we were so busy that I found no time to write home; I had written last from the *Mekteb Harbi* after the examination. The brigadier sent me orders, notes, and summonses at all hours of the day and night; one day I tramped six times to and fro. I had the satisfaction to be complimented by him, and by others, on the way in which I managed things at the station. Although I had received no actual appointment, yet I was looked upon by silent consent as a sort of semi-official commander of the station encampment. We got terribly overcrowded and uncomfortable: men slept in the waiting-room, in the office, on the platform, in the cars, in the signal-box, and our own cottage sheltered a dozen officers besides ourselves. The Bulgarian maiden had enough to do. If kisses and compliments were coin of the country she would have been amply paid. Before starting I made a collection on her behalf, and obtained a *lira*.

At noon on April 3 (as nearly as I can judge from fragmentary notes and at this distance of time) I received my final instructions for the break-up on the morrow. The loading of the carts with the stores occupied us till darkness.

The column consisted of 3,000 infantry, two heavy batteries (destined for Sofia), one ordinary and one light horse-battery, with twelve artillery ammunition waggons, one squadron of regulars, and fifty Circassians. We had charge of 500 light carts, drawn mostly by oxen, 100 head of cattle, and 400 packhorses, 200 of which carried ammunition, the rest victuals. I had for my company four packhorses for the biscuits, &c., and a cart for the cooking utensils,

officers' luggage, spare blankets, and digging tools. We carried no tents.

The infantry was divided into two march regiments, each regiment consisting of three march battalions, each battalion of from three to five march companies. The strength of the companies varied between fifty and 200 men ; most of them were commanded by lieutenants. These tactical formations were only temporary, and were dissolved in Widdin. Pardo Pasha was the commander of the column.³⁰

At daybreak on April 4 we started, in glorious weather. In spite of the early hour the Turkish population of Simtchina and Bellova turned out *en masse* to wish us good-bye. The cavalry was in front ; then came one of the infantry regiments, then the artillery and the train, lastly the second regiment. Turkish peasants acted as drovers. They treated the animals with remarkable kindness, quite unlike their usual treatment by Christians. Among the drovers were two men who were reported to be notorious Rhodopé robbers ; they looked it, although they affected a meek and mild demeanour. The Circassians formed the van of the column, acting as guides and pioneers, and fixing upon the cooking- and sleeping places.

I have no recollection or notes of our stages. The distance from Bellova to Sofia is sixty-five miles by road, fifty as the crow flies. We accomplished it in six days, doing thus an average of eleven miles a day, which was not too great an exertion ; though it must be borne in mind that our journey lay through mountainous country, that the Turkish roads are notoriously bad, that it had rained up to the day of our arrival in Bellova, and that we were travelling with guns, carts, and cattle. Sometimes we could make no more than a mile an hour, owing to the steepness and bad condition of the track. The principal places on the road are Banya and Samakov, each under 5,000 inhabitants ; the district is sparsely populated. The infantry did not pass through Samakov, but cut off a piece of the road by means of a footpath. The scenery is lovely, particularly during

the first stage, where the road leads along and through the glorious forests of the Rhodopé range. The weather was fine, but chilly at night ; no rain fell.

We slept in the open air, lighting fires, which were kept burning throughout the night by the sentries who guarded the carts ; rolled ourselves up in our blankets and great-coats, huddled close to one another, had our haversacks for pillows and the starlit sky for a roof, and slept the sleep of the just, the young and the exhausted—which means that we each and all slept remarkably well.

Three or four of my men became footsore, and had to be accommodated on carts ; one was so exhausted that we had to leave him behind in Banya. I found that walking barefoot when the roads were soft and wet, and rubbing the feet with melted mutton-fat off the uncooked joints at night, and again before starting, prevented soreness ; it was Sergeant Sefi who put us up to these dodges. I took care that my men washed their feet when we passed a stream, generally twice a day.

Each company commander was left pretty much to his own devices. As on arrival in Widdin I had the smallest proportion of invalids in the column (4 per cent., including footsore men, whilst some companies had 10 per cent.), I am justified in saying that I managed tolerably well. The column was drawn out so long—the distance between head and tail being five miles on the road—that during the tramp itself it was impossible to obtain instructions from the superiors ; I was therefore constantly called upon to decide and act on my own judgment. The result was, that whereas I had left Constantinople as a boy, I arrived in Widdin a man. It would be ungrateful not to mention Sergeant Sefi for his valuable assistance and advice ; also Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb and the corporal of the Saloniki Redifs I consulted often, and with advantage.

The medical men from Philippopolis had returned thither ; we had therefore only one surgeon, who used to travel up and down the column on horseback, and made up in zeal

ably well, but he could not sing—he had no music in his conception.

Towards dusk on April 9 we came in sight of Sofia, which lies in a superb position in the centre of a fertile plain studded with pretty villages and bordered by gruesome-looking mountain-ranges on all sides.

At the present day Sofia is the capital of the autonomous principality of united Bulgaria; then it was the chief town of a Turkish province. It had 14,000 (now 25,000) inhabitants, one-third Turks, one-third Christians, one-third Jews, called Spanioles from their Spanish or Portuguese descent.

The five great roads which meet in Sofia³² owe, partly their existence, partly their improved condition, to the energetic Midhat Pasha, whose assistant, Essad Pasha, built several good streets within the town. Midhat established also an orphan asylum for children of all nations, and a cloth factory, which furnished the material for the uniforms of the entire Turkish Gendarmerie.

The plain of Sofia is covered with Roman relics.

There were several camps in the neighbourhood, one of which accommodated us for a day, devoted to rest. We were hospitably entertained by the local officers.

At daybreak on April 11 we started, our column having been joined by another march regiment of two battalions, as well as four batteries and a large additional train. We had all in all 5,000 men, thirty guns, eighteen artillery ammunition waggons, 800 carts, 800 packhorses, and 500 head of cattle.

The distance from Sofia to Widdin is 100 miles as the crow flies, but owing to a bend of the road the route is increased to 140 miles. The journey leads northward in a straight direction to Lom Palankah, a fortress on the Danube thirty-five miles below Widdin; but from this point it has to be made on a road which is twice as long as it need be. I believe that *viâ* Pirot is shorter; but this route was not taken, probably because the road leads for nearly twenty miles quite close to the (then) Servian frontier. At the present day the districts of Pirot and Nish belong to Servia.

We crossed the Balkans by the Ghintzi Pass, at the northern outlet of which lies the town of Berkovitzza.

The Balkan scenery is magnificent, sometimes of overwhelming grandeur; but as this is not a book of travel, I refrain from inflicting a high-toned word-picture on the long-suffering reader. The passage was accomplished with only one serious mishap, the loss of a cart with its two oxen and its driver, who tumbled in a ghastly, twirling heap into the awful abyss below, and were lost to human aid and human vision. To get the guns over the steep, narrow paths was a difficult and dangerous task. One gun got into such a precarious position that it could only be saved by cutting the traces, detaching the carriage with axe-blows, and allowing the latter to roll into the precipice, where it broke into splinters with a terrific crash. There were scores of minor accidents: broken limbs and dislocated joints, smashed carts, and so forth. A good many horses and oxen fell, and had to be killed. On the whole our passage showed a favourable result, for a certain percentage of accidents and losses is reckoned upon.

The highest elevation of the Ghintzi Pass is 4,800 feet above sea-level; the surrounding summits rise to 6,500 feet.

We had as assistants and advisers men who, in private life, followed the respectable vocation of robbers. The Balkan genus of the species robber was scarcer than the Rhodopé genus, and is now extinct. As guides we had a few *zaptiés* (gendarmes), fine strapping fellows, who seemed to be on excellent terms with the brigands. These gendarmes, 14,000 in all, of which 5,000 are mounted men, are formed into battalions and brigades when war breaks out, and are looked upon by the Turks with great favour, who consider them the *élite* of the Ottoman Army. We had none in Plevna, so that I cannot judge what their performances may have been.

As regards Balkan passes I made a curious observation. Officers, well-informed, hardened, experienced and courageous men, used to speak of many passes—for instance, those of

Troyan and Etropol (*alias* Baba Konak)—as impracticable for heavy artillery and train under the most favourable conditions, *i.e.* during summer and in glorious weather; whereas later the Russians crossed successfully, with all their baggage, artillery, and convoy, by these very passes, under the most unfavourable conditions imaginable—that is, in December and January, with storms raging, with snow foot-deep, and in severe frost. The Turk, brave and stubborn in the field, with extraordinary powers of endurance, has a holy horror of mountain-passages. This brings me to another ridiculous aversion of the Osmanli soldier: his dislike of rain when not in front of the enemy. Drill used to be interrupted when a few drops fell, and the whole battalion scampered to the tents with ludicrous hurry! Yet the same men bore the scorching July heat on a forced march, bore thirst and hunger and fatigue without grumbling, laughed at the terrific deluge in which the great September battle was fought, braved December snows and frost like Eskimos. Ergo: do not judge the Turkish soldier by appearances in time of peace.

Between Berkovitza and Lom Palankah³³ there is not a single place of importance. West Bulgaria has few towns, but hamlets and villages innumerable. The first half of this stage is through hilly and pretty country, the second is uninteresting, partly in gently undulating, partly in flat territory.

In Lom Palankah, a strong and important fortress, crowded with soldiers, we stayed a night in camp, and then continued on the bent road which I have mentioned; but next day, near some villages (Topolovatz and Krivobara), the infantry, cavalry, and packhorses were taken, by Bulgarian guides,³⁴ along field-paths, whilst artillery and train proceeded on the high-road. The guides led us, across downs, to the Danube near Artzar or Artchar, where we camped, and whence we continued, next morning, on the bank of this beautiful and majestic river, called Tuna by the Turks, Dunav by the Bulgarians, Dunarea by the Roumanians.

In the evening we came to Vidbol, where we stayed for twelve hours and made ourselves look presentable; on the

following afternoon (April 22) we marched into the camp of Widdin.

I must mention that between Lom Palankah and Artzar we passed through a village which I remember by the euphonious (Roumanian) name of Cazanova, although I cannot vouch for its correctness, not having found it on maps.³⁵ Here we saw thirty or more ruined and partly burnt Bulgarian houses, and were told that all its inhabitants had been butchered by the Moslems the previous summer, in retaliation for a prior slaughter of the Turks by Bulgarians and Roumanians. Tereb, who knew a little Bulgarian, spoke to an old woman who said that she was the only survivor of a family of fifteen. Similar, if less glaring, instances of the havoc wrought by the rebellion we found in nearly all Bulgarian and in many Roumelian villages. Wrecked Christian churches and chapels were a common sight. We came across one or two heaps of unburied skeletons. Near Tatar Bazardjik there were, so I was told, twenty ruined and deserted villages. Verily, religion has much to answer for!

We had accomplished the distance between Sofia and Widdin in twelve days, an average of ten miles daily, taking into consideration that we saved twenty miles by the short-cut. The artillery and train had to tramp the road *viâ* Bielogradchik (Belgradchik), and arrived late in the evening of the following day (April 23). The entire journey from Bellova to Widdin, 165 miles in a straight line, had occupied twenty days, including the day's rest in Sofia and the extra day taken by the artillery.³⁶

The weather had been fine throughout, but chilly after dark, with nasty cold blasts from the north. I had in my company two footsore men in the carts; two I had left behind in Berkovitzta: one had broken his leg in the passage of the Balkans, the other had swollen glands in the groin. I was slightly sore at the heels, though nothing much to complain of.

The two permanent camps of Widdin lay two and a half

miles north-west of the town, and held already 10,000 men. They were comfortable and in good sanitary condition; the internal routine was well organised; the discipline, temper, and *morale* of the Widdin troops were excellent. Tents had been prepared for us.

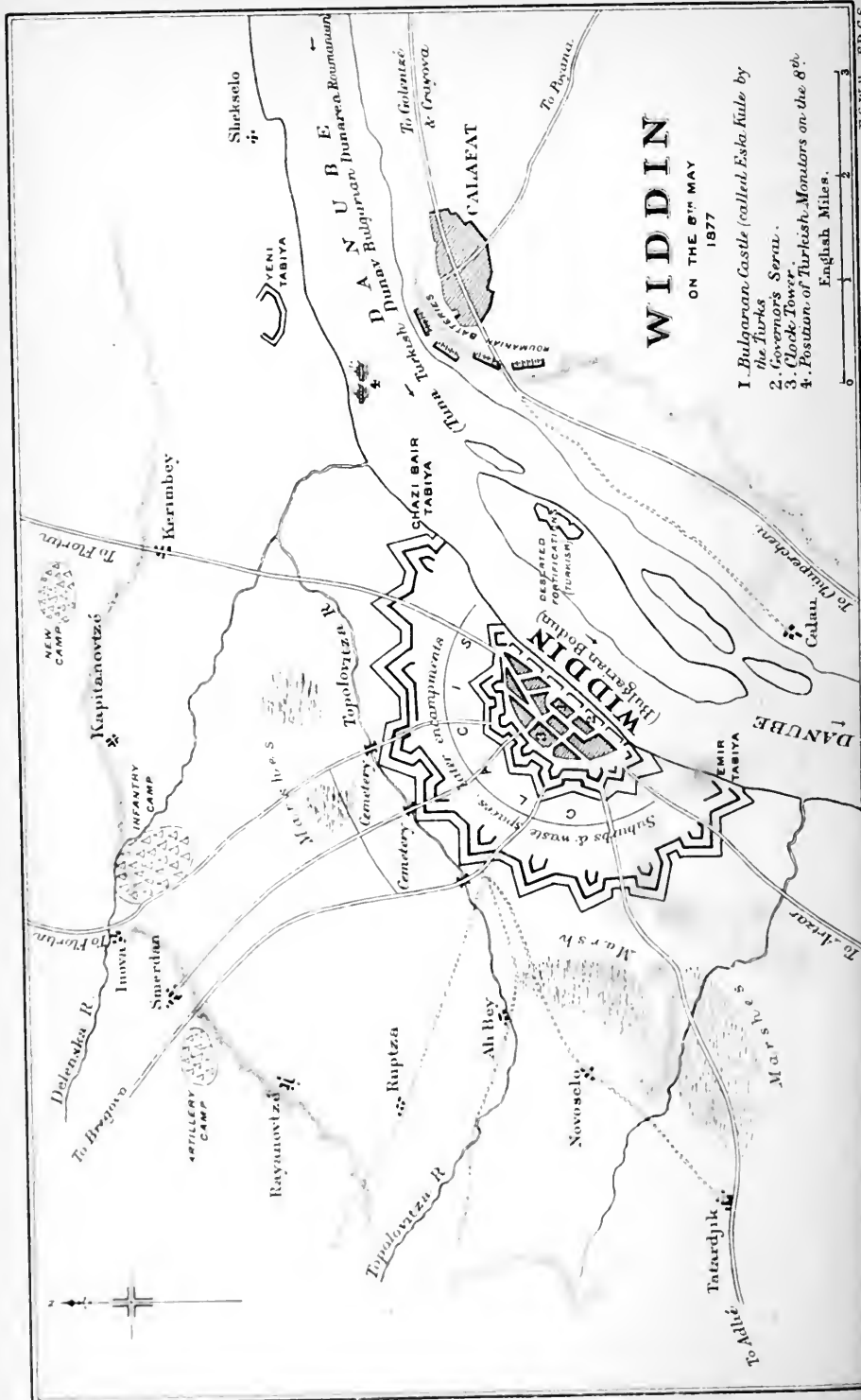
In the evening of April 22, hearing that the commander, Mushir Osman Pasha, was in camp—he had his headquarters in town—I presented myself at a tent where I was told he was in consultation. An aide-de-camp took my message, which was that I had arrived safely with the detachment entrusted to me, except three men invalided and dropped *en route*, and returned saying that the Mushir wished me to retain my command until after the arrival of the artillery and train, when I should have fresh instructions from Colonel Mahomed Hussein Bey (Pardo Pasha returned to Lom Palankah next day, and I did not see him again). The aide-de-camp added, in a private whisper: ‘Things look very black; the Czar is expected in Kishineff, where six mobilised corps are concentrated, ostensibly for the manœuvres; we expect the declaration of war at any moment.’

Next day (April 23) it was all over the camp that the outbreak of hostilities was near. This prospect wrought the men’s enthusiasm up to the highest pitch; with firm step, head high, and bright eyes, even the veriest stripling (myself, *verbi gratia*) strutted about as if the victor’s laurels rested already on his youthful brow.

I took care that my men made themselves look smart; otherwise we had nothing to do but to rest, chat, and smoke. Jack and I received a hearty welcome from the officers of the camp. Our guns and carts arrived late in the evening.

We spent an anxious and excited night. Somehow we were all sleepless: for death loomed darkly in the distance.





WIDDIN

ON THE 6TH MAY
1877

1. Bulgarian Castle (called Eska Kula by the Turks)
2. Governors Serai.
3. Clock Tower.
4. Position of Turkish Monitors on the 8th

English Miles



CHAPTER IV

THE DECLARATION OF WAR : TWO AND A HALF MONTHS'
INACTIVITY IN WIDDIN

APRIL 24 TO JULY 12, 1877

WIDDIN (Bulgarian, Bodun) counted, in 1877, 13,000 (now 20,000) peaceful inhabitants, of which half were Bulgarians, a fourth Turks, the rest being composed of Roumanians, Greeks and Jews, with a sprinkling of Servians and Austrians. Gipsies and Circassians were settled in the neighbouring villages.

The town lay for the Turks—and lies at the present day for the Bulgarians—in a peculiarly exposed position. The triangular territory, shaped thus by the course of the Danube, the natural boundary of Bulgaria and Roumania, cuts deep into the country of two possible (in 1877 certain) enemies : Servia on the west, Roumania on the north and east. This was the most north-westerly corner of the Ottoman Empire. The position of Widdin was of paramount strategical importance.

The Danube is here 2,800 yards wide. Opposite is the Roumanian town, Calafat ; between the two is a flat island, claimed at that time by Turkey, two and a half miles long, uninhabited, with a deserted fortification dating from Omar Pasha's time. The distance between this island and the Roumanian shore is 500 yards. There are also three smaller islands.

The fortifications of Widdin were of modern construction, held 500 pieces of heavy fort artillery, and were well kept

and in thorough fighting condition. The terraces and batteries on the water side were of an imposing character. On the land side there were two concentric lines of works, each semicircular in shape. The outer line, which enclosed the whole town, was an earth wall twenty feet high, with several parallel ditches ten feet deep, broken by eleven redoubts, each holding a battery; the end redoubts rested on the Danube, one on each side of the town, and faced both ways. The low-lying meadows in front of the trenches could be (and were later) flooded with river-water. The inner enceinte was of a more formidable character, consisting of seven well-built and heavily armed bastions. Between the two lines were suburbs, and waste spaces utilised for encampments. The inner line enclosed the town proper, which contained two barracks, two hospitals, a steam factory for army biscuits, and the picturesque old Bulgarian castle, a heavy, jail-like, gruesome relic of the Middle Ages, which served as magazine. There were no outworks, save one a mile above the town, on the river, called Yeni Tabiya (New Battery); later, other isolated batteries were constructed.

Widdin's natural protection—besides the Danube—consists of the flat, exposed, marshy approaches which surround the town in a semicircle, these being in their turn bordered by a concentric line of hills. On the slope of one of these, two and a half miles north-west of the town, near the village of Inova, on the Flortin (Florentin) road, was our camp; that of the field artillery lay a mile to the west of us, near Smerdan, on the Bregovo-Negotin-Belgrad high-road. A third, smaller camp, established at a later date, was two miles to the north-east of ours.

The climate of Widdin is unhealthy.

Calafat lies on a higher level than Widdin, which latter is therefore more exposed to Calafat's guns than Calafat is to Widdin's artillery. On April 24 Calafat was almost denuded of troops and barely armed. Why Osman did not occupy it I do not know; it was said he acted on orders from the Seraskierat.

Calafat is historically known for the unsuccessful siege by the Russians, 1853 and 1854, and Omar Pasha's brilliant defence, which cost the Czar's army 20,000 lives. The town is a commercially rising place, and has in my opinion a future, granted the continuance of the Hohenzollern king's sensible government and Russia's non-intervention. At the present day it counts 3,000 inhabitants. Grain is its export article. Under favourable conditions the Danube here is navigable for small seagoing vessels.

Widdin, too, has prospered since 1877. Its Bulgarian and Jewish inhabitants are pushing merchants; the Turks, here as everywhere, lack commercial enterprise, and confine themselves to retail trade and mechanical arts. The famous old Widdin industry—gold and silver filigrees—grain, fisheries, and transshipping constitute the town's common wealth.

In 1877 Widdin possessed an interesting Museum of Arms, created by Sami Pasha, which contained many fine relics of the Turco-Austrian wars, and, among other things, the weapons and uniforms of those of Louis Kossuth's Hungarian volunteers who, in 1849, entered Turkish territory not far from the town, and were here disarmed.³⁷

From the hills surrounding the town, Widdin, with the minarets of its thirty-two mosques (many of the former were destroyed by Roumanian shells in January 1878), and commanded by the towering Bulgarian castle, looked gay, picturesque, and Oriental; to it Calafat presented a striking contrast, being sober, plain, and European.

After the fall of Plevna three Roumanian divisions besieged Widdin unsuccessfully, the town being brilliantly defended by 8,000 men, under Mehemed Isset Pasha. In 1879 the fortifications were demolished by the Bulgarian Government, acting upon the stipulations of the Berlin Congress. When the Servian-Bulgarian War broke out in 1885, the town was hastily fortified, and was held by a small garrison against the Timok division of the Servians, who attacked it, unsuccessfully, on November 18, 25, and 28, 1885. At the present day Widdin belongs to Bulgaria, and

is likely to prosper under this *régime*, so long as Russia does not interfere.

Early on April 24 I reported myself to Colonel Mahomed Hussein Bey, and asked for instructions. He had none to give me, save to retain my command until further orders. He added that there was much running to and fro between the Mushir's headquarters in town and the tent of the camp-commander—I think it was then Adil Pasha, who will appear frequently in these pages; that the wire between Widdin and Constantinople had been at work all night; that Osman had not been to bed, and had repeatedly been called to the telegraph-office to hold telegraphic conversations with the Padishah.

During our discussions a comic incident occurred. Suddenly Miralai Mahomed Hussein Bey exclaimed, in good vulgar German: 'Au, du verdammter Schweinehund!' referring, poetically and appropriately, to an early and precocious bee, which had climbed up his arm beneath the sleeve on a private journey of discovery. I replied, demurely: 'Ich danke für das hübsche Compliment, Herr Oberst'; whereupon we both burst out into a hearty laugh, to the astonishment of a group of officers in the vicinity, who were discussing the situation with grave mien and portentous bearing. The colonel took me into his tent, where we squashed the invader and applied ointment from a travelling-box of medicine, spirits, and cosmetics. The old man was as vain as he was ugly, and his spectacled face reminded me of a superannuated owl in the Berlin 'Zoo,' which, as a boy, I used to admire for its unconscious comicality, except that the Colonel had a tell-tale nose like a valuable Dutch bulb. He gave me a glass of capital Cognac and a fine cigar (I remember it was a Villar Regalia Reina fina), and told me that he hailed from Hamburg, Moritz Meyer being his aristocratic name; that he had run away from home as a youngster, that in Constantinople he had made himself agreeable to a pasha, and *voilà* the result. His name, his features, and certain peculiarities of demeanour proved to

me his Semitic origin. He had turned Mahomedan (in everything save abstinence), passed for a Turk, and had seven wives and concubines and twenty children in Constantinople. He advised me to look after my promotion by making myself a toady to my superiors and sinking every consideration of honour, manliness, pride, and dignity, and to look after the main chance whenever I had money to handle; he did not express this so crudely, but used more ambiguous language. I need hardly say that I acted in every respect in direct opposition to his advice. The Old Sinner gave me his benediction and fifty cigars, and told me to hold my tongue—which I have done up to this day. His redeeming features, as I learnt, were splendid behaviour under fire, coolness, determination, and readiness of resource—as proved in the Servian War—and an extraordinary, almost feminine kindness towards inferiors. He was sent, a few days afterwards, to Biélogradchik, and was wounded when the Servians took Pirot (December 28, 1877), as I heard during my incarceration in Kharkoff. I do not know whether he recovered or not.

In camp there was everywhere the subdued excitement which precedes an important event. The men held *sotto voce* discussions, officers talked in whispers, in knots of two or three, or in circular groups, with parliamentary procedure. Messengers ran to and fro, aides-de-camp galloped between camp and town, and every officer coming from the fort was waylaid and interrogated.

Late in the afternoon I was in my tent with Jack and Sergeant Sefi, engaged in making out a clean copy of my roll. Outside, Ibrahim was superintending the company washing their socks, in borrowed tubs. My tent I shared with Seymour, Tereb, and five lieutenants from our old march battalion.

Suddenly there was a commotion, rushing to and fro, exclamations, a roar which swelled into a tremendous shout. Jack, who had gone out, came back immediately with a grave face, and uttered the momentous word 'War.' We

three Franks shook hands in silence. Just then Ibrahim rushed in, terribly excited. After having told us that the report had originated nobody knew where, and had spread nobody knew how, he added that the men were so wildly enthusiastic that the harmless, necessary washing-tub drill was out of the question. I stepped out, and soon put this right with a few mild reproaches; I quoted Napoleon's maxim, 'Wars are won with the legs,' and added one of my own: 'A leg is nothing without a stocking,' which I recommend to the compilers of epigrams uttered by famous men.

Then there was quite a formal council held by officers whose tents were in the vicinity, fifty or more of them. We squatted on the ground, and gave each our opinion.

Late in the evening we officers were bidden to Colonel Mahomed Hussein's presence, and the latter formally told us, in the name of the Mushir, that the Czar had declared war upon the Sultan. Parade was to be held early next morning. The Old Sinner, having too freely consulted his medicine-chest on the strength of the bee's and the Czar's declarations of hostilities, was wise enough not to make the speech which the occasion called for.

During the night sentries were set around the camp, but my company was exempt from this duty. From this moment no civilians were allowed to enter without permits.

Next morning (April 25) we turned out *en masse* to an open space outside, and there a general—I think it was Adil Pasha—made a speech. I was too far off to catch its purport; but I joined lustily in the shouts of 'Allah,' which in Turkish do duty for the British 'three cheers.' I saw and heard enough to feel convinced that the Widdin army was animated by enthusiasm and patriotism in their highest and best form.

There was much speechifying during the next weeks. The Padishah had proclaimed the holy war (Tchihad) against the Ghiaurs; the commanding generals and the priests took care to feed the fire of religious zeal. But the fanaticism of

the Turkish soldier is a good deal less rampant, whilst his patriotism is greater than is popularly believed. Many officers considered the 'Tchihad' game played out, and even illiterate men used to smile at the spouters, who, by the way, were in the habit of displaying a *black* banner. I confess ignorance of its meaning or purport.

Later in the day I was asked by Colonel Mahomed Hussein for my roll, and an hour afterwards I received orders to send the fifty Redifmen to another part of the camp, to be incorporated into the battalions to which they belonged. I bade them good-bye in suitable words, and their spokesmen expressed gratitude for my kindness. I instructed Lieutenant Tereb to deliver them to their respective majors. A little later Sergeant Sefi and the two corporals who had come with us from Constantinople were summoned to join a detachment which was being formed to proceed to Rahova. Jack and I took Sefi into our tent, which happened to be deserted. The poor old chap pressed our hands hard, and said 'God bless you, gentlemen,' in a trembling voice. That was the last I saw of Sergeant Sefi, late one of her Britannic Majesty's representatives in Syria.

By Colonel Mahomed Hussein's orders I retained command of my 150 recruits, with Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb, until next morning (April 26). Then I received instructions to place my detachment and myself at the disposal of Major Taki, commanding a Nizamié battalion quartered in another part of the camp; this done, my command would terminate. I took care that my men looked their best, and that my own humble person appeared to advantage. Carrying all our belongings with us, we marched to our destination. I drew the men up in double line, Lieutenants Seymour and Tereb in front with drawn swords, and reported myself to the Major, who inspected us and expressed satisfaction. An hour later the 150 men had been incorporated, in nearly equal parts, into the four companies of which this battalion was composed. To my intense joy, Jack and Ibrahim remained with me in the same company, which had

lost its lieutenants, save one, in the Servian campaign. Thus ended my first company command, after having lasted thirty-one days.

My company consisted of 160 privates, including the recruits, divided into three squads, the first under Lieutenant Hardar, the second under Lieutenant Herbert, the third under Lieutenant Seymour. Each squad had a sergeant and a corporal. The company carried the battalion's colours, which were entrusted to Lieutenant Tereb, who had under him a corporal and twelve privates; I shall call this fourth squad the colour squad. For distinction and brevity's sake I shall refer to Ibrahim as the 'Ensign,' although it must be understood that this grade (the German Fähndrich) is not known in the Ottoman Army. The Turkish soldiers called ensign (*sanjakdar*, *beirakdar*) the particular man (usually a corporal) who happened to carry the colours, whatever his grade may be. The standard is of red cloth, with white half-moon and stars. Our venerable rag had seen service since 1828. Each battalion has also a green flag, consecrated to the Prophet, which does not take the field, but is kept at home, and brought out on religious festivals. I never saw ours.

My company was composed as follows:—

	Captain	1
First squad:	Lieutenant Hardar	1
	Non-commissioned officers	2
	Men say	50
Second squad:	Lieutenant Herbert	1
	Non-commissioned officers	2
	Men say	50
Third squad:	Lieutenant Seymour	1
	Non-commissioned officers	2
	Men say	50
Colour squad:	Lieutenant Tereb	1
	Corporal	1
	Men	12

Non-combatants :	Bugler	1
	Drummers	2
	Captain's orderly ³⁸	1
	Train soldiers, in charge of four packhorses	2
	Total say	<u>180</u>
Summary :	Officers	5
	Non-commissioned officers	7
	Men say	162
	Non-combatants	6
	Total say	<u>180</u>

At this strength the company remained until the first battle of Plevna (July 20). The estimate of fifty privates per squad is approximate.

Of the 150 privates of the company, 110 had taken part in the Servian campaign, forty were recruits. Of the fifty privates of my squad, thirty-five were veterans, fifteen were novices.

The other three companies of my battalion had approximately an average strength of 160 each, all told. The battalion was composed as follows :

	Major	1
	Kol aghassi	1
	Bash chawush	1
	One company say	180
	Three companies at 160	480
Non-combatants :	Kiatib (clerk) with officer's rank	1
	Surgeon, ³⁹ with officer's rank	1
	Train soldiers, in charge of two ox-carts and two pack-horses	3
	Corporal, in charge of train soldiers of whole battalion	1
	Total say	<u>669</u>

Summary : Officers	19
Non-commissioned officers	26
Men	say 594
Non-combatants	30
Total	say <u>669</u>

Of the five officers of my company, four were mekteblis—a unique proportion. The three captains and the nine lieutenants of the other three companies of my battalion were alailis. Of the nineteen officers of my battalion, five were mekteblis and fourteen alailis.

I must here introduce my brethren-in-arms to the indulgent reader.

Major Yussuf (Joseph) Taki was of Persian descent and of Stamboul birth. He was by far the best-educated Turkish officer I have met, having been to school in Germany, and a year each in London and Paris. He spoke the three languages fluently, likewise Arabic and Persian. As an officer, he was excellent so far as administration and organisation were concerned, for which reason our battalion generally fared better than other troops; but under fire he had the propensity of becoming excited and losing his head, although his courage cannot be doubted. He was a strict disciplinarian, and very particular as regards the men's personal appearance—a sore point with the Osmanli soldier. He had ample means, was fond of good cheer, and drank a little in secret, a habit learnt in England; he was forty-five years old, passably good-looking, and inclined to be stout. I suspect that he had a predilection for the Christian religion; in any case, I have seen a German Bible in his hands. He had one wife, in Constantinople, an Armenian Christian from Ispahan, who had borne him several children; the photos of these he carried about with him, and nothing pleased him better than to hear them praised as pretty. An eccentricity of his was a partiality for the English historian, Kinglake, of whose 'Invasion of the Crimea' the fifth volume had just appeared. He used to quote this author to Jack and me much as Wilkie

Collins's Mr. Betteredge quotes Robinson Crusoe. Throughout the campaign he behaved well to us.

The kol aghassi was a Constantinople man by descent and birth. He was an alaili, and owed his promotion to the patronage of some pasha. He acted as a counterfoil to the major, being cool and determined in action, but bad as regards administration, because ignorant; also because ridiculously fussy and fidgety. To us officers he was all smiles; to the men he behaved brutally, and was loathed accordingly. I did not like him, and had, happily, little or nothing to do with him.

The kiatib (clerk) was a painstaking and capable official and a gentlemanly young fellow. He had been in Vienna, spoke German, played a shrill tin whistle with dexterity and murderous effect, and won my money at dominoes.

The surgeon was gruff, uncouth, and unpopular. At the expense of the Ottoman Government he had been in Berlin and Paris. His skill was mediocre; his energy and activity left nothing to be desired.

The battalion's aged bash chawush deserves mention only because he was the worst specimen of the few bad members of the Turkish Army I have met, being lazy, voracious, selfish, dishonest, and a coward.

Our captain was called Ahmed Mustafa Derbendi, and was born and bred in Constantinople. He was little and ugly, but strong and wiry, and as agile as a kid, having in his appearance and movements some resemblance to a particularly vicious-looking goat. He was fairly educated. Under fire he was brave and dashing, but in the administration of the company he had the fault of leaving too much to the first-lieutenant to do; the latter, who was, indeed, his factotum, being overburdened with work, was not always able to make good the captain's dilatoriness, in spite of his zeal and activity. The captain had a peculiar habit of falling asleep without a second's warning and at the most unlikely moments; but occasionally he would feign sleep, and watch the men from under his half-closed eyelids. He had private means; two

wives and several children in Constantinople, of whom he appeared to be very fond ; was good-natured, and in many respects remarkably childish ; for instance, he loved gambling for a few piastres, or for cigarettes, and even biscuits, by means of dice improvised out of pebbles and thrown at a mark—a game of his own invention. He treated me very well, always *en camarade* ; frequently he would consult me.

The first-lieutenant, Mehemed Hardar by name, came from a Mesopotamian family settled in Constantinople. He was twenty-eight years old, over six feet high, and broad to correspond, and of enormous physical and constitutional strength. He had gained his promotion to the rank of *mulazim evvel* during the Servian campaign. He was an *alaili*, and owed his progress entirely to his usefulness. To the captain he was indispensable ; even the major treated him with marked respect. I have already mentioned his zeal and diligence. He was a little slow of comprehension : he did not easily grasp the meaning of an order, of a remark, and was unwieldy also in his movements ; with this reservation he was a good and reliable officer. Personally, I was much attached to him ; I always found him a loyal friend. His education was primitive—he could read and write, that was all. He was a lover of chess, and a fine player ; later, in Plevna, where we had board and men, he would bring these out at the most inopportune moments, with the request to me for just one game. In Widdin camp we had primitive wooden chessmen, made by the soldiers, from Hardar's designs, of the most ridiculous pattern. We drew a board on the back of my map of Bulgaria." A touching feature in Hardar's character was his great love for his parents and his two sisters ; his father, like most men of small means, had only one wife. Mehemed's death in the battle of July 30 must have been a catastrophe to the family. May the earth of Plevna's green hills be light to him !

With the lieutenant of the second squad, William Herbert, you are (or fancy that you are) on terms of consider-

able intimacy ; also him of the third, John Seymour, and the ensign, Ibrahim Tereb, you know well. There remains but to mention the greatest original, and in many respects the most admirable among the hundreds of Turks whom I have personally known—I refer to the sergeant of my squad. This man, Bakal by name, came from Silivri, on the Sea of Marmora ; he was fifty years old, short, thin, grizzly, withered ; his face was disfigured by small-pox—a dozen scars, and two or three so-called ‘date marks.’⁴¹ He had joined the army as a lad, and had fought in and near Silistria in 1853 and 1854, before Sebastopol 1855, in Montenegro 1862, in Crete 1866 to 1868, in Bosnia and Servia 1876 ; peace service he had seen in the Caucasus, in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Arabia. He could read and write Turkish and Arabic, and speak Bulgarian and half a dozen of the Caucasus dialects. All that he knew—and he was a well-informed man—he had taught himself, for as a child he had learnt nothing. The range of his accomplishments was astounding. He could cook like a French chef, make clothes like a tailor, mend boots like an accomplished cobbler, bind up a wound and set a broken limb better than the average Turkish army surgeon, prescribe effectually for every known disorder, beat the drum and blow the bugle in a manner to shame professional performers ; he was the best shot of the battalion, and in the erection of earthworks trained engineers appeared contemptible beside him. He could lead a squad, a company, a battalion as well as, or better than, any lieutenant, captain, or major could, and had done so in emergencies. He had been everywhere, had seen everything, knew every road, path, hill, village, farm and khan throughout his sovereign’s dominions. He could set sentries, pitch camp, throw out skirmishers, effect a retreat, form a square, like a Prussian company leader. With this he was respectful, polite, and grave. He never laughed, on principle, he used to say : ‘a *man* never laughs.’ Sometimes the soldiers would go to work to bring a smile to his rugged features, and their antics would have made the Sphinx hold her sides ; but Sergeant

Bakal moved not a muscle of his face, looking at them with kindly forbearance. He was cool and brave in action, never lost his head, never lost his temper. His readiness of resource was wonderful. He had a way out of every difficulty, a remedy for every evil, an antidote for every scrape or obstacle, an item of personal experience to draw upon in every unforeseen circumstance; in the latter particular his splendid memory was of never-failing aid. The manner in which he managed the sometimes terribly difficult question of supplies was admirable; often my squad had a good meal when others were starving. To the men he was considerate, but would not overlook an offence or relax discipline. They had the good sense to see of what immense value he was to the squad, and liked him, not only for that, but also for his integrity and sense of justice. With invalids he was as gentle as a woman, in worldly matters outside his vocation as simple as a child. He had no friends or relations; he said he had never loved, but I have caught him taking a faded photo out of a venerable pocket-book and looking at it wistfully. The Turks, as a rule, do not have their portraits taken (I believe Islam forbids the pictorial representation of human beings); the original must therefore have been a Christian or a Jew. Report said many strange things. Granted he had never loved, I know from experience that he could become deeply attached, for I happened to be the object of his affection. From first to last Sergeant Bakal was my guide, philosopher, and friend. What I should have done without him I know not. Never once did he fail me when I appealed to him for advice or assistance, or for an act of friendship. I have not seen him or heard from him since we parted in Bukarest.

The corporal of my squad can claim attention only in so far as he was a good average specimen of the Turkish non-commissioned officer: ignorant, apathetic unless roused, but reliable, obedient, and willing; never acting on his own initiative, but always executing orders with the utmost scrupulousness; doing his duty well, but no more than his

duty; stubborn rather than brave, with a fine contempt of death and a supreme hatred of Ghiaurs in general and Russians, Servians and Bulgarians in particular; contented, patient, with splendid powers of endurance; coarse, uncouth, occasionally brutal, but moral, sober, and kind to co-religionists.

The following summary judgment, which I am qualified to pass, on the men of my company can be applied to the Turkish foot-soldiers in general, of whom those under and near me were fair average specimens: In attack they lacked the dash of the Roumanian infantry (which was even better than the Russian); on the defensive they were so stubborn, undaunted, and obstinate as to justify Moltke's observation, 'The Turks only commence to defend where others would leave off.' They were cheerful and obedient under circumstances which would have demoralised others, and not only existed, but retained strength and faculties, where others would have succumbed to privations.

It cannot be denied that a sudden and total change came over the spirits of the Turkish troops—except the garrisons north of the Balkans—after the fall of Plevna. Their conduct was, first mediocre, then bad, finally disgraceful. The causes were external, and must be looked for in bad administration, dispiriting example, demoralising influence, incompetent command, and in the total breakdown of the Ottoman Empire's governing machinery. Such exceptional circumstances cannot qualify the judgment passed by a Moltke.

As regards the superior officers directly above me, I must pass over the grades of kaim-makam and miralai, as I had half a dozen colonels during the war. My mirлива changed thrice; one was remarkable for a preposterous claim upon a fancied resemblance, physical and intellectual, to Moltke, which made him the laughing-stock of the camp. He used to strike attitudes and talk like a barnstormer.

My ferik was Adil Pasha, one of the best officers of the Ottoman Army, clever, brave, painstaking, and unselfish.

The Mushir placed much reliance on him; he was looked upon in camp as a thoroughly efficient leader.

At this juncture I crave permission to introduce the man who will be known to the remotest posterity as the Defender of Plevna, to the Turks as Ghazi Osman.⁴²

Mushir Ghazi Osman Nuri Pasha was born in Tokat, Asia Minor, in 1837. He passed the Mekteb Harbi, entered the cavalry, fought as mulazim zani in the Crimean War 1854 to 1856, distinguished himself at Eupatoria March 21, 1855, became mulazim evvel 1856, served during the Syrian rebellion, and became yüzbashi 1860; fought in Crete, and became kol aghassi and binbashi 1866, kaim-makam 1867, mirakai 1871; took part in the Yemen campaign, 1871 and 1872; became mirliva 1874, ferik 1875. In the Servian War he beat the enemy in the decisive battles of Isvor (July 18, 1876) and Saitchar (August 7, 1876), and was made Mushir.

If honours and distinctions, fame and wealth, can make a man happy, Osman ought to consider himself the luckiest man alive. At home and abroad he has been celebrated, and deservedly so, as one of the heroes of modern history; he has made the world ring with the record of his deeds; he has been named, and rightly named, the Leonidas of our times. Far better had the fair and spotless fame of a soldier sufficed him, and had he not decided to paddle in the polluted pool of politics. He should have borne in mind that no one, not a god, can touch filth without soiling his fingers. But let us conveniently forget what has happened since 1878 for the sake of the glorious past, and let the reader's memory recall lovingly the thrill that went through the astounded world when from the green hills of an obscure Bulgarian town Osman thundered his imperative, 'Thus far, and no farther,' into the ears of Russia's affrighted hordes, when the skies were rent with the fame of the Defence of Plevna.

Osman, though not tall, was of commanding and dignified presence. He was taciturn and grave, abrupt of speech and

manner, rather disdainful in looks and words, and had naught about him of the petty forms of politeness. The distinguishing feature of his appearance was the eyes, which had the peculiarity of grasping a situation with one slow, comprehensive look, as if they had the magic and conscious power of making their owner become possessed of whatever point or object they rested upon. A peculiarity of his was a violent dislike of foreigners—English, French, Germans, Russians, all alike. In 1877 he had never left his own country (except when campaigning), and spoke, besides Turkish and a little Arabic, only French, and that badly.

In a London drawing-room or a Paris salon Osman would be the man to turn the heads of the hysterical, unoccupied, hyper-civilised women of the day.

A report of his death appeared in various papers some years ago, but was subsequently contradicted. So far as I know he is alive now. All the better for Turkey if, when Russia makes her next attempt upon Constantinople—which will be the last, one way or the other—Ghazi Osman's vigorous hand should once more grasp the tottering banner of the Crescent.

A feverish activity commenced with the day of the declaration of hostilities: drills (company, battalion, brigade), real, hard, solid, practical warlike exercises several hours each day on the hills, which provided excellent manœuvring ground; target-practice, with a supreme disregard for consumption of cartridges astounding in impecunious Turkey; parades and inspections by mirlivas and feriks almost daily; examinations of foot-gear, underclothing, uniforms, outfit; sharpening of swords and bayonets; rifles taken to pieces, cleaned, inspected, tested. Supplies came hourly from the surrounding towns and villages—forage, grain, cattle; in camp we retained only what was required for our sustenance; the bulk was stored in Widdin. Ammunition was dealt out to the tune of 500 cartridges a man, eighty of which were carried in the pouch. We had sentries round the camp, strengthened at night, outposts on every prominent point of

the hills, detachments in the towns and villages on the Servian frontier, and in those on the Danube.

The nearest point of the Servian frontier is thirteen miles to the north-west of Inova, but an eminence interrupts the view.

Roumania was looked upon as a certain enemy, although up to May 8 no shot was fired. That happened to be also the first day on which I left camp (of this more anon), my battalion having escaped outpost duty. Servia was known to be too exhausted to take the field; but everybody knew that Prince Milan was only waiting for Turkey to stumble, when he would appear on the scene to share in the spoil.

Prince (now King) Charles of Roumania, although a rebellious vassal, was spoken of with a certain amount of respect; whilst the uncomplimentary things said about Prince (now ex-King) Milan of Servia have been justified by subsequent events.

À propos of Servia, Jack and I got into conversation with a Servian who was in Turkish service (as spy, I presume), and often came into camp. We bought of him a bottle of slivovitz, the national drink, a delicious but dangerous liqueur, made of plums. He told us that the bulk of his countrymen did not desire war with Turkey, having no complaints against the Ottoman nation or Government; that the campaign of 1876 was prompted by Milan, who was Russia's obedient slave; that the Russian volunteer officers had behaved scandalously, having apparently been the scum of the Czar's army; that their greed, dishonesty, drunkenness, immorality, gambling propensities, brutality, incapacity, and cowardice surpassed comprehension.

Calafat was eagerly scanned through the telescopes. Towards the end of April there were movements of troops visible, and guns came in. The rage in camp was great against the wirepullers at home, the Imperial favourites and parasites who, with paper-soldiers and Harem-made pashas, constituted the Council of War, and had prevented the Mushir

from occupying Calafat and the islands of the Danube ; for it became known that Osman had submitted elaborate plans for an invasion of Roumania, which had been vetoed. The soldiers' confidence in the Victor of Saitchar was unbounded ; the Government at home and the supreme command (up to July 23 Abdul Kerim Pasha was Serdar Ekrem ⁴³) were held in open contempt.

It did not take me many days to become thoroughly conversant with the routine of a leader of a squad of fifty men : I had Sergeant Bakal as competent and never-failing adviser. To call over the names twice a day ; to send a detachment every morning for water to the stream (the Delenska, a tributary of the Danube) which flows past Inova ; to see that the men kept themselves, their clothing and their tents, clean, garments, footgear, and arms in good condition ; that they behaved with decency and order ; to arrange the days and hours for bathing and washing, and supervise these ; to watch over the distribution of the rations and the cooking of dinner—these and other domestic matters constituted the prosaic but necessary and useful part of my duties. I was most particular over sanitary matters, more so than any other lieutenant, Seymour excepted. I found out the good points of every man, and distributed the various offices accordingly : A. is a good cook, B. is a professional cobbler, C. can mend clothes, D. is a barber and haircutter, E. is a skilful mechanic, and can repair rifles ; and so forth. Likewise I ascertained their weak points : F. is dirty, and wants special supervision on washing days ; G. is greedy, and requires watching at meal-times (six to eight men had a copper vessel between them) ; H. is footsore ; and so forth. Sergeant Bakal, having had charge of the squad from the battle of Alexinatz (October 28, 1876) until my arrival, knew the men thoroughly, and I had but to follow his advice.

During leisure hours we officers fenced and practised revolver-shooting ; occasionally we borrowed horses and had a ride across the hills. We played chess, draughts, dominoes ; the Turks had various other games. I started a diary, and

wrote home, receiving several letters in reply whilst I was in Widdin camp. Mail-day was an event: the soldiers would almost mob the letter-carriers, and of Turkish phlegm not a vestige was then visible. The advent of the mails was as erratic as that of comets: on an average we received letters once a week; the postal arrangements were bad, and grew worse as time went on. Some of us officers sent regularly to a Greek grain-merchant in Widdin for European newspapers, which were generally three weeks old. Turkish papers were occasionally distributed. French novels, Austrian journals, as well as fruit, cakes, sweets, and small articles of every description, could be purchased of the pedlars, mostly Jews and gipsies, who besieged the camp, but were not allowed inside, except with permits.

The men amused themselves with wrestling, running-matches, and highly diverting donkey-races, often for prizes (tobacco and coffee) given by the officers. After dusk, recitations by the camp-fires were a favourite recreation, at which also officers attended; for some of the men had remarkable histrionic talent, and the euphonious Turkish language is music in itself without the aid of flutes, flutes, and semi-quavers. Such a group presented a striking and romantic picture.

Turkish soldiers have not the boisterous merriment of the German and French; they are sedate and contented, and know how to draw enjoyment out of little material.

The weather was fine. In May we were in the midst of summer. Rare and brief showers did no damage and caused no discomfort. June brought heat, broken by north winds and cool, dewy nights; in July the heat was intense and continuous.

Bands we had none; but scratch orchestras were formed by the buglers and drummers, and by amateurs with tin whistles, fifes, cornets, and triangles. There were several big drums, kettledrums, cymbals, and trombones in camp; these were brought out occasionally. The result was terrifying. The most formidable and unnerving of our musical instruments

was a species of bagpipes with an unearthly sound, which resembled nothing so much as the groans of a dying donkey which had been bitten by the vagrant dogs which, in Turkey, attach themselves to a camp ; whilst the agonising howls of the conscience-smitten murderers were faithfully reproduced by the performances of a man who had captured a clarinet last year from the Servians. This consumptive trophy of war used to set the camp oxen going. The concertina, the cad's delight in all countries, terrorised also the Sultan's army ; the specimen in question (made in Germany) had been bought of one of the Jews who prowled around the camp. Sometimes the gipsies would give us a concert, with violins, tambourines, and guitars ; and dark-skinned, lustrous-eyed maidens in picturesque tatters would swing their shapely limbs in voluptuous rhythm. To wind up this asthmatic dissertation on music I have to express heartfelt gratitude for one providential circumstance : in 1877 the banjo had not yet been introduced in the East. It only wanted the banjo to make our musical misery complete !

Each tent held ten men. We five officers of the company had one between us. The tents were good, strong, and comfortable ; we made ours cosy and homelike. We had a table fitting round the centre-pole, several camp-stools, a cupboard and a chest of drawers manufactured by the company's joiners out of empty cases, and painted gaily in green and red, and a washing-stand improvised out of superannuated cooking-utensils. The ground was covered with matting and sheepskins ; our beds (a mattress, a bolster, and two blankets each) were on the floor. We bought many little articles for use, comfort, and ornament in Widdin and the villages, and of the pedlars.

I wish I had the time to stroll with you through this town of canvas, and show you the ferik's luxurious quarters, a tent of green material embroidered with red, the post-office, the telegraph office, the Staff's office, the kitchens, the workshops, the stables, the thousand-and-one curiosities

which merely to enumerate would encroach unpardonably upon my space and your leisure.

The administration of the Widdin army was better than that of the other Turkish forces, thanks to its capable and energetic commander; but even with this reservation it did not bear comparison to that of a German, Austrian, or even Russian army. I have heard it said, by prisoners in Russia, that affairs in the East Bulgarian corps were simply disgraceful, even before the war, until later Mehemed Ali Pasha brought German discipline and honesty to bear upon corrupt Turkish officialdom. How we should have fared without Osman and his able chief of staff, Tahir Pasha, I cannot venture to say. As it was, the supply of no article of food could be depended upon, save the biscuits, which were made in Widdin, and were of good quality. When, as sometimes happened, meat, bread, salt, &c., ran short, the soldiers had to beg, borrow, or steal in the fields, in deserted and occupied houses. Pillage, though strictly forbidden, could not always be avoided, for men must eat. But such occurrences were rare, and it speaks well for the *morale* of the Widdin army that they did not affect discipline.

The culprit was Redif Pasha, the Minister of War. He neglected his duties, deceived his Sovereign, and took no steps to remedy the countless defects of which the various commanders were loudly and constantly complaining. Not to mention the faulty food-supply, here are a few instances of Redif's corrupt administration: insufficiency of artillery and cavalry compared to the infantry strength, of live-stock for guns and trains, of ammunition waggons, of carts and packhorses; absence of reserve stores of clothing; bad condition of roads and bridges; confusing orders and counter-orders; want of proper instructions; unnecessary marches and counter-marches. Sometimes commanders were left for days and weeks without replies to urgent telegraphic inquiries; the artillery had never more than two or three ammunition waggons to the battery, instead of the regulation six; there were no bridge trains, no sanitary service, and an entire, or

almost entire, lack of engineers. In Widdin, Osman had seven squadrons of cavalry to forty-four battalions of infantry! Redif Pasha was tried by court-martial in May and exiled to Rhodes.

The out-of-door existence suited Jack and me capitally; we were in splendid health and exuberant spirits. The romance of camp-life never wore off; the salutary influences of God's fresh air and glorious sky, of discipline and physical exercise, after a degrading, unmanly existence as clerk in atmospherically and morally polluted city lanes, have lasted me through all these years. It was particularly the social independence which charmed me: 12,000 men we counted, and not a single woman, and ever so much happier were we than men who have each a dozen females—wives, daughters, servants, mothers-in-law—to minister to their 'comfort'!

Now for the seamy side. Punishments for small offences were: Partial withdrawal of rations; arrest in sheds erected for the purpose, and a painful but harmless flogging, administered in this wise: the delinquent's arms were crossed and bound behind, and his head was held 'in chancery,' so that legs and back formed an acute angle; the apex of the latter was denuded of its clothing, and presently also of its natural covering by a strong dose of cold bamboo-cane. I had occasion to complain of a man's dirtiness and indecency; the captain spoke to the major, who prescribed fifty grains or units of the medicine aforesaid, which were administered under my supervision. I did not like this turn of affairs, but was not allowed to back out of it. Later I was glad: the man improved greatly. For a day or two his antics when attempting to sit down were both instructive and exhilarating. A man of the first squad had been punished so often for stealing his comrades' rations that he had grown case-hardened, and used to smoke whilst the ceremony was in progress.

Officers were punished for slight offences (such as exceeding leave of absence or being late for drill) with arrest, for repetitions or less trifling misdemeanors with incarceration

in Widdin, or degradation. The Mushir had the power of promotion to the rank of miralai, later extended to that of ferik, a mark of confidence on the Sultan's part; he had also the power of degradation, and exercised it, though not within my circle of acquaintances.

For grave offences—desertion, disobedience, treachery, neglect of sentry duty, and, later, cowardice—the punishment was death. One deserter from Widdin was caught as he was crossing the Servian frontier near Bregovo. He was shot next morning. I was present, and was struck by the calm and serene expression on his countenance: evidently he had made his peace with God. His was the first dead body I had beheld in my life: a few months later I had seen many thousands.

There were not many deserters from Widdin; and later, in Plevna, until November, deserters were few and far between. Not so with the other Turkish armies, Suleiman's excepted. Not the fear of the enemy, but the bad food-supply, caused entire companies to disappear, so that sometimes one battalion had to be made out of the remnants of two or three; and yet Turkey is one of the richest and most fertile countries of Europe.

Spies were tried by court-martial, and, if found guilty, were sometimes shot, sometimes hung. Five or six, all Bulgarians, were executed whilst I was in Widdin camp. Many were allowed to escape for want of proof.

Pillage, marauding, and outrages upon Christians were looked upon as serious crimes, and punished generally with a severe flogging; murder, with death.

A number of marauding loafers hung around camp and followed us afterwards to Plevna. When caught in the act small mercy was shown to them. In May six were surprised sacking a Bulgarian house, and were strung up there and then. Later, battle-field hyenas were dealt with in a like manner. I myself have cheerfully assisted when a dozen of these were hoisted in a row.

The bastinado I saw applied only once. It had virtually

been abolished in the army, and was disestablished throughout the Empire by law a year or two later.

I never incurred a punishment, but was once in disgrace, through no fault of mine, of which more in its proper place. Jack's and Ibrahim's records were stainless.

Lastly, the religious side of camp-life. Our devotions were practised in this wise: For want of a steeple or minaret two long poles had been erected, between which was fastened a ladder. This a fellow in picturesque garments climbed morning and evening, with as much grace and agility as his burly figure would allow. A sentence from the Koran was sung out from the lofty position on the top step, and almost everybody flopped down; a few used to stand with folded arms or hands; some knelt; most men touched the earth with their chins, whilst their posteriors pointed heavenward in a dignified, artistic, and religious manner. A few verses were recited, and the ceremony was over. On Fridays there was grand parade; during the day men were sent in relays to the Widdin mosques; but in May the latter practice ceased.

Early on May 8 I obtained leave of absence for the day: I brushed my clothes, polished my boots with grease, made the steel of my sabre sparkle, curled an imaginary moustache, and walked to town to astonish the natives.

Widdin, like all Turkish towns, was disappointing. The exterior was charming, the interior stank. The streets were narrow, crooked, filthy, infested with beggars and vagrant dogs, the houses dilapidated. Pools of dirty water and blood and heaps of offal lay everywhere on the primitive pavement.

As I was looking about for a likely place to buy cigarettes, a group of officers came round the corner, with measured steps and in grave consultation. In front was a man with a handsome bearded face and keen eyes—a man born to command, to whom the soldiers, who swarmed in the streets, rendered military honours, whom the Turkish and Jewish civilians saluted with Oriental stateliness and

reverence ; he wore a severely plain uniform, devoid of trappings and decorations. It struck me that this must be the Mushir, whom I had not yet seen. Beside him walked my ferik, Adil Pasha, and two officers whom I did not know at the time ; one I ascertained later to be Talahat Bey, one of the Mushir's aides-de-camp, the other an officer of engineers, whose name I have forgotten, and have not found mentioned in the works I have consulted ; when he appears again I shall call him by the fictitious appellation Ali Bey. The four officers looked grave and preoccupied ; they walked with their eyes on the ground, and the Mushir's features bore an expression of mingled annoyance, anxiety, and determination. Behind them were seven or eight others ; among them my major, Tahir Pasha (the Chief of Staff), and Hassib Bey (principal surgeon to the Widdin army), who later, in Plevna, proved himself to be an efficient and capable man, different from the ordinary run of Turkish army surgeons.

I threw the Old Sinner's lovely Villar away (it was picked up by the most picturesque and high-flavoured beggar whom it has ever been my lot to see or smell in or out of mendicant-infested Turkey), gave my fez a jaunty twist, and placed myself in military posture. As they passed me, Adil Pasha, who knew me, happened to glance up, and perceiving me, said something to the Mushir. The latter looked at me in that peculiar manner which I have described when introducing the reader into the Ghazi's august presence, and beckoned to Major Taki. The group came to a standstill in front of me, motionless like a statue. The Mushir said to Adil in his deep-toned voice : ' Ask him if he speaks French fluently.' I presume this talking to me by proxy was Osman's way of expressing superiority. Adil put the question in Turkish ; I replied in the affirmative. Then the Mushir addressed a colonel of the second group : ' Ask him in French what he is doing here.' The colonel cleared his throat, and said, with an atrocious accent : ' Que faites-vous ici et où allez-vous ? ' I made answer : ' Je ne fais rien, mon

Colonel, je me promène ; j'ai obtenu permission jusqu'au soir.' The Mushir thought for a moment, nodded his head negligently, and walked on. Adil Pasha and Major Taki, knowing me personally, returned my salute ; the rest did not. Thus ended my first encounter with the man who has made history.

Seeing a lieutenant of artillery pass by, I asked him : ' Can you tell me where I can buy good cigarettes ? '

He replied : ' Round the corner ; the little house to the right, with the green door ; Schmaichel, the Austrian Jew. Offer him half of what he demands, and then he will cheat you.'

On this excellent recommendation I knocked with my fist at the green door, which was opened by a lovely Jewish girl of barely nineteen, in a pretty costume of European cut, but Oriental in the splendour of its tints. I stated my business in Turkish ; she looked at me hard with her glorious eyes, and said, with a demure, roguish smile on her full, red lips :

' Der Herr Officier sind wol ein Deutscher ? '

Of course I knew I was coming to the house of a German-speaking Jew ; all the same I was taken by surprise. She had an absolutely pure accent, and it sounded so prettily.

I made answer : ' Yes, dear child, and as it is the privilege of every German to kiss any German girl he may meet abroad, so shall I give thee a good old German kiss.'

I took her into my arms, without encountering any difficulty save a mild and formal protest.

This ceremony over, I stated my desire ; whereupon she whispered : ' Don't tell grandfather that you have kissed me—he would charge you, oh, such a lot ! '

Then she called out : ' Grosspapa ! ' How homely the word sounded to me in this out-of-the-way corner of the world !

Schmaichel, a venerable Shylock, took me into a little back room like the space behind a small pawnbroker's counter.

I bought 2,000 good cigarettes and a pound of smuggled

Servian tobacco, the best I have ever smoked ;⁴¹ although the price was by no means high, I doubt not but that the Jew made a handsome profit. Have you ever known one who did not ? I gave instructions for sending the packet to camp. Shylock called 'Doris !' presumably an abbreviation of Dorothea ; the girl took down my directions.

Business over, the old Jew said :

'Der Herr Laitnam wollen mir nun die Liebe und Gewogenheit anthuen, mit mir zu trinken ein Glas echten Tokayers auf das Glück der türkischen Waffen : denn dass zu uns kommen die Russen, davor möge uns doch bewahren der gute Gott allergnädiglichst ! Sie haben mir erschlagen Anno 49 meinen lieben Erstgeborenen, und dieses holden Mägdleins Vater und Mutter sind von ihnen worden ausgewiesen, und haben müssen verlieren ihren ganzen Kram, und sind vor lauter Herzeleid und Elend gar jämmerlich verstorben.'

The old Jew's quaint and pathetic German is untranslatable ; I have therefore given it in the original as literally as I can remember it. I shall summarise his speech by saying that he asks me to drink a glass of wine with him, to wish success to the Ottoman arms and God's protection against the Russians, who have slain his eldest son in 1849 (presumably when the Russians came to Austria's aid in suppressing the revolution organised by Kossuth), and caused the girl's parents to die of broken hearts and privations.

Doris produced a venerable flask of Tokay, filled three glasses, which we clinked together, and the old man said, in a trembling voice :

'Möge der Gott meiner Väter, der da lenket alle Schlachten, beschützen uns vor den Russen, und den lieben jungen Herrn nehmen in seine Obhut immerdar !'

('May the God of my fathers, who guides all battles, protect us from the Russians, and take this dear young gentleman for ever in His keeping !')

Doris said nothing, but looked at me as woman had never done before.

She attended me to the street-door. Here she requested me to draw my sword. She touched the blade with her lips, and said solemnly :

‘Nie heraus ohne Grund, nie hinein ohne Ehre !’

(‘Never draw it without cause, never sheathe it without honour !’)

And thus my virgin sword was blessed by pretty Doris of Widdin.

She watched me from the steps, and when I turned the corner she waved her hand and her eyes sparkled. I felt sad and preoccupied.

Presently, as I was walking aimlessly about, the idea struck me to get a demand draft on my banker in Constantinople cashed. I addressed a passing mulazim zalisé of the fort engineers, who said :

‘At the Jew Schmaichel’s, near the clock-tower; the alley with the mosque at the bottom, the house with the green door.’

I thought it wiser to wait till another day, when I should have a capital pretext for repeating my visit.

My watch had lately betrayed irregularities of conduct. I saluted a naval officer—I presume he belonged to one of the Danube monitors, two of which were stationed off Widdin—and begged him to advise me.

He said : ‘Direct your steps to the clock-tower, and ask for Schmaichel the Jew—a little house with a green door.’

I was still wondering at Shylock’s many-sidedness, when a horrible noise shook me out of my reverie. There came round the corner the following strange procession :

In front danced rather than walked a man clad in priest’s garments, who, with a stentorian voice, between snatches of ‘music,’ spouted of holy war and Infidels, and invited all that could carry arms to join His Majesty’s army as volunteers.

Behind him strutted an enormously fat, ridiculous, pompous bash chawush of the fort artillery, who wore a

dozen medals and a huge nosegay, and had evidently got himself up for the occasion regardless of expense. He smoked a cigar a foot long, and carried a leather bag with money. Beside him crawled the most abject specimen of humanity I have ever beheld—a tramp, capless, bootless, almost ragless, with sunken cheeks, a filthy, matted beard, desperate, burning, hungry eyes, lean, shivering, reeking with dirt and vermin. These were the examples of ‘before and after,’ as the spouter repeated in as many modulations as only the Turkish language can produce. They made a most ludicrous but highly effective pair; the *mise en scène* would have done credit to an accomplished stage-manager. Outside a pantomime and a temperance meeting I have never seen anything so absurd, before or since.

Next came a band composed of soldiers and civilians, playing the following instruments:—

A set of bagpipes such as I have tried to picture; a fife shrill as a bad-tempered engine-driver’s steam-whistle; a pair of kettledrums; a big drum; an ordinary military drum; another drum, three feet long, carried horizontally, and beaten at each end; a pair of cymbals; a triangle; a set of bells on a pole.

This choice catalogue may give the reader some notion of the horrible din; melody there was none, because the fife had only three notes in its *répertoire*; and as to harmony, I was vividly reminded of Wagner’s ‘*Nibelungen*,’ which I had heard in Bayreuth the year before.

The performers had adorned themselves and their implements with flowers and ribbons, and made a brave show.

After the band came a fat infantry corporal, carrying a decorated stick, with which he made extraordinary manipulations, much like a superannuated, overfed professor of jugglery rehearsing the tricks of his youth. He was followed by a dozen privates, who shouted ‘Allah’ vigorously whenever music and spouter gave them a chance to be heard. One carried a dark green flag with a gilt crescent on the top,

another a huge black silk banner embroidered with gold letters ; between the ensigns walked, with drawn sword, a young lieutenant, an *élégant*, who openly turned up his nose at the exhibition.

Then came six or eight miserable objects—lean, dejected, draggletail outcasts. These were volunteers. They had their hands tied behind them, to prevent them from thinking better of it and depriving His Majesty of such gallant champions. The procession passed a provision shop (I wish I had space to describe to you the Turkish tradesman's establishment !), and the recruits thrust a cannibalistic leer upon the viands exposed behind the iron-barred, paneless window—a leer that spoke of starvation. Some houseless mongrels crawled beside the volunteers, with tails between their legs, stopping every now and then to give themselves a scratch and a shake ; and there was a remarkable resemblance between these canine vagabonds and the dirty human pariahs whom they attended.

The official tail of the procession was formed by a dozen smart, strapping artillerymen, who looked very handsome in their becoming uniforms, and eyed the proceedings with unconcealed disgust. These were the decoy-ducks.

The unofficial rearguard consisted of a swarm of boys, who flung garbage and street filth at the volunteers (a dead rat was shuttlecock-in-chief), and a miscellaneous crew of curious spectators—Turks, Jews, soldiers, fishermen, veiled women with and without babies, cronies and children, all more or less apathetic—with a few kavasses (policemen), who were as fussy, pompous, and aggravating as their brethren in London, Berlin, and elsewhere are wont to be on such occasions.

I got into conversation with some fort officers, who expressed contempt and mistrust of all irregulars, Circassians, volunteers, and such-like ragamuffins. We followed the procession, and watched the bash chawush enticing two abject beggars and one decent young fellow ; which latter was immediately captured by my companions, who bound him

and took him into their midst, inviting me to accompany them to the fort.

We passed a green tent, outside of which dirty gipsies were performing a German café-chantant tune on guitars, mandolines, a scrappy fiddle, and the inevitable big drum with cymbals. This was a place where they enrolled volunteers.

The ditty was one I had heard in a Berlin 'tingel-tangel,' as small music-halls with obliging *chanteuses* and waitresses are euphoniously called in North Germany; its soul-stirring burden ran thus:—

'Schön ist ein Cylinderhut,
Wenn man ihn besitzen thut.'

'Pretty is a silken tile—
If you have one, all the while.'

Query: How had this inane song found its way from Berlin to Widdin? ⁴⁵

We entered the fortifications by the water side. The captive was handed over to a bash chawush of the fort infantry. I accompanied the officers to the terrace, which was in battle array, and looked imposing with its long line of guns in fighting trim: the artillerymen at their stations, squatting on the ground and whiling away the time by telling stories; numerous sentries; groups of officers scanning Calafat; detachments of infantry lying in the shelter of the parapet, rifles in pyramids, ready to repel an attack at a second's notice. Before us stretched the glorious blue Danube. Our two monitors were moored alongside a quay, steam up. I expressed a desire to see them; one of my companions hailed a naval lieutenant, who showed me over his craft, which deserves description.

The vessel had the length of a below-Bridge Thames steamboat, with greater breadth of beam, and was low in the water in the waist, but had a centre deckhouse, which covered the entire width and three-fourths of the length of the ship. She was driven by a screw, and had a powerful, British-made engine (the vessels themselves were built in Ters-hané, *i.e.* arsenal, Constantinople), two long guns in the

bow, and two smaller ones on each side, all the guns being of Krupp make, and housed within the deck-cabin, which contained also the engine. At the broad, square stern were two thin funnels, two ventilators almost as tall as the funnels, and two small deckhouses, mere boxes, one for the commander, the other the galley. The crew accommodated themselves in the centre deck-cabin as best they could. Beneath the deckhouse were the boilers; below the main deck, fore and aft, were spaces for fuel and stores; the ammunition boxes—one for each gun—appeared to me to be in dangerous proximity to engine and furnaces. The wheel was on the roof of the deck-cabin, which was railed in with a kind of parapet for infantry; here were also two boats and a signal-pole flying a pennant, the Turkish flag being hoisted at the stern. This pole was not amidships, but on the larboard, and this peculiarity, with the funnels and ventilators in the stern, the long bow-chasers like thrust-out stings, and the uniform black colour, gave the craft a queer lopsided, extremely vicious appearance; she reminded me of an ugly black, beetle-like insect, whose acquaintance I made in the East, and whose sting is most hurtful.

The vessel was in capital trim; the cleanliness of the decks was so painful that I felt constrained to apologise to the lieutenant for stepping on them. The brightness of the machinery would have done credit to a British man-of-war. The sailors—of whom I saw a dozen—wore the English Jack-tar costume, the stokers bathing-drawers, the gunners (thirty) the uniform of the fort artillery. A company of Chasseurs came on board, with their two light Whitworth guns; they looked smart in their becoming blue-and-green dress. A Scotch engineer's workman, with red hair, whisky aroma, and dirty white-and-yellow blazer, gave me, in return for a quid of tobacco, this tip: 'Something is up to-day, sir; have a look-out for squalls.' The lieutenant and the chief engineer had been educated in the naval training-college in Chalki, and spoke English.

The other vessel was in principle of the same build, with minor variations.

When I had stepped ashore the two monitors cast off and steamed up the river, like venomous giant beetles in search of prey.

By means of a telescope I scanned the opposite bank. There was not much to be seen. Mid-stream the low, green, deserted islands, where grass, wild flowers, reeds, and shrubs throve in a profusion worthy of a virgin forest's entangled growth; beyond, a long stretch of flat, marshy shore, on the left three miles broad, and bordered by bare green hills of picturesque outline rising to 300 feet above river-level, on the right extending to the confines of the horizon, with a thin column of smoke, lazily curling upwards, denoting a farm or village, and with two small lakes like dreamy blue eyes in a placid face. Of human life and activity I perceived little, of war less. Slightly to the right was a hamlet (Calau) close to the water's edge, with boats drawn up on the mudbank; to the left lay Calafat, on the slope and summit of a hill 100 feet high, whence came the peaceful sound of a lazy, high-toned chapel-bell. The position of the town prevented my seeing the streets, but I detected some masked batteries. On our shore I saw to the left the end redoubt of the outer enceinte (called Ghazi Bair Tabiya, *i.e.* Victorious Hill Battery) and our one outlying work, Yeni Tabiya, the latter nearly opposite Calafat; both looked like molehills. Between them was a waste space, beyond, the flat, green, deserted, tortuous river-bank. Of the rebellious vassal State's armed sons I saw but one specimen—a black speck on the shore exactly opposite, looking much like a flea on green paper; I took him for a scarecrow, until a shifting of position proved him to be a sentinel guarding the embryo kingdom in solitary grandeur against the Unspeakable Turk.

There was at that time an entire division in and near Calafat. The peaceful inhabitants had been compelled to evacuate the town a few days before.

I shall seize this opportunity of saying a few words with

respect to the appearance of the Roumanian soldiers, although it was not until September that I saw Prince Charles's champions near enough to perceive the colours and details of their garments. The uniforms were decidedly mixed: a Roumanian division looked as if it belonged to half a dozen nationalities. The line infantry and artillery have a French appearance; the regular cavalry (*rossiori*) look like the Red Hussars stationed in Potsdam, whose gorgeous figures are familiar to every tourist in Berlin; the *doborantzi* (territorial infantry) and *kalarashi* (mounted militia) wear the national costume, with the peculiar footgear which is (or was) in use also with those Turkish battalions who were clad Zouave fashion, viz. shoes of undyed leather and gaiters laced round the leg nearly up to the knee. The gendarmes wear Prussian helmets, the artillery Austrian *képis*; the majority had a headgear which deserves the prize for unmitigated hideousness. The German *pickelhaube*, the Russian cap, the British bearskin, are ugly enough in all conscience, but the Roumanian bonnet beats them all.

Large vessels there were none in Widdin at that period, all such having either been requisitioned by the Government and utilised on the Lower Danube, or quitted the probable scene of conflict for peaceful and remunerative climes. Just before the declaration of war several seagoing steamers and a number of *karlashes* (one-mast sailing-vessels, low in the waist and high in the stern) had arrived with provisions (15,000 tons of flour) and the material for constructing a pontoon bridge to Calafat, which latter was never commenced, thanks to Mahmoud Damad and Company. The steamers had gone; the stock of boats and fishermen's craft belonging to the town, the *karlashes*, and two or three decrepit schooners, were moored in places of safety and guarded by sentries, to prevent them being utilised by spies, traitors, and deserters.

A sailing-boat appeared like a white speck in the upper bend of the river, and came floating down towards us on the Danube's broad bosom, in idyllic contempt of the

formidable array of guns on either side, perhaps 250 in all, every one ready to hurl its death-dealing contents at the neighbour across the road.

It was 1 p.m., and I felt hungry. My companions intimated that if I happened to be possessed of that useful commodity called *para* (money), they could undoubtedly get me some dinner from the fort cooks; and as to luxuries, such as coffee, cakes, &c., I had but to say the word and hand over the coin, and they would send to town for anything I liked to name. They would be pleased to keep me company, and should they at any time be so lucky as to receive their salaries in good hard *liras*, they would be charmed to reciprocate; at present I had to take the will for the deed.

I invited all that choose to come, handed over the money, and gave my orders. The report that a British bey (lord) was standing *treat* all round spread through the fort like wildfire; presently I had twenty guests, and the soldiers who served us were delighted and zealous.

The table was laid between two projecting corners of a building belonging to the inner enceinte, on a slightly higher level than the terrace, in view of the guns and the river, but concealed from any zealous pasha who might take it into his unreasonable head to step out and have a peep at the rebellious vassals.

On our right was a heavy battery with strong earthworks, overgrown with grass studded white and yellow with daisies and buttercups; beside the battery was a solid stone dwelling-house and a small building—an observatory, with a signal-pole. In front of us were: Firstly, a courtyard, six feet below us, with twenty light green summer tents, to protect the soldiers forming the fort guard against the glare of the sun, particularly objectionable on account of the whiteness of the stone which formed the building material. The men had just had their dinner in this place, and were now dragging handcarts with ammunition to the vaults below the battery. Secondly, the terrace, fifteen feet wide, formed by the top of the inner wall, with a parapet four feet high and

three feet thick. In the crevices of the stone grew a beautiful white, bell-shaped flower in remarkable profusion. By stepping up to the parapet we could see: Thirdly, the protected way between the two walls, ten feet wide, where several companies were squatting down, arms piled, in full fighting order. Fourthly, the outer wall, with rifle-holes for the infantry in its parapet. Here sentries paced gravely to and fro. This wall was twelve feet lower than the inner, and eight feet above the protected way. Its foot was washed by the river. Immediately to our left was another heavy battery, mounted in parallel stone walls, the space between which was filled up with soil, forming thus a solid protection to the guns and their crews ten feet thick. Beyond the battery was a space where vessels were moored; beyond that were other batteries. The building at the back of us formed part of the barracks.

I insisted upon a tablecloth, and there was fluttering and consternation in the martial dovecot. 'The lord wants a tablecloth!' exclaimed one, awe-stricken. 'Shall I fetch my blanket?' asked a budding genius. Somebody had a grand idea: 'Run to Schmaichel and borrow one! The old Jew has a tablecloth, if anyone in Widdin has.'

I solicited a personal introduction of my guests: One yüzbashi, sixteen or eighteen mulazims evvel and zani, two mulazims zalisé, all belonging to the infantry stationed in the town, to the fort artillery, or to the engineers.

One said, 'If we can get a superior to join us we shall be safe, as it would give an official colouring to the repast.'

Some went in search of this useful article, and brought back in triumph a hungry kain-makam.

The messenger returned, waving an unclean rag. As the first dish (a capital sweet soup, obtained from a Turkish confectioner's in the town) was being served out there appeared upon the scene the most incongruous trio I have as yet beheld.

The first, an Englishman, long, lean, and unlovely, was clad in a costume such as only the travelling Briton can invent or wear. It was of thick, shiny, waterproof canvas (the

thermometer was at 80° in the shade and the sky cloudless!) of an indescribable hue, something like a dirty light grey tinged with bilious greenish yellow; it was uniform throughout, even shoes and cap being of this material; and when he wiped his nose, I declare the handkerchief was of the same hue! He carried over his head a parasol of a like colour, and had slung across his shoulders, with straps and cord, a field-glass, a water-bottle, a brandy-flask, a haversack, a leather pouch, and a case containing snuff, tobacco, pipe and cigars in its various compartments. He was a journalist, and went by the name of Captain Chock; his real name being Mac, but what kind of a Mac I know not. He could not speak a word of any language but English; he used a slate, upon which he sketched the article required; for instance, he would draw a sheep, and they would bring him a plate of boiled mutton; or a cow, and they would bring him a glass of milk. Report had it that last year, in Servia, with Mehemed Ali Pasha's army, he had wanted mushrooms in a village inn; after an hour's waiting they had brought him an umbrella! He had access to the fort, lived in an empty shed outside Widdin, which he shared with two German war-correspondents, and was known all over the place as much for his liberality and kindness as for his eccentricities. A week later the Mushir gave all the newspaper-men notice to quit, and the Captain changed his quarters for—I think—Nikopoli.

The second was a small, crooked, shabby, spectacled German surgeon, Doctor Schmidt by name, who looked withered and broken down and somewhat pathetic. Last year he had served in the Turkish Army, which he had quitted when the war was over; now he was temporarily attached to Fort Widdin, there being a dearth of medical men. He wore as yet his threadbare civilian attire, as they could find no uniform sufficiently small for him. He spoke Turkish, Arabic, Servian, Bulgarian, Roumanian, Russian, in addition to English, French, and German, and of course Latin, Greek, and Hebrew; in Sanskrit he was an authority.

Captain Chock was 6 ft. 6 in. long, Doctor Schmidt was 4 ft. 6 in. short, and they always walked arm-in-arm through the streets of Widdin. The Turkish word 'chok' means 'much'; perhaps they had christened the Captain thus because there was so much of him.

This day they were separated by a lady, as men have been parted by women from times immemorial. The separatrix was twenty years old and delightful to behold, a symphony of youth, grace, beauty and devilry. She was dressed in a short skirt of red flannel, pretty Vienna shoes, black silk stockings, and a richly embroidered blue Bulgarian bodice, with gilt ornaments; her superb black hair fell across her shoulders, and a fez showed her handsome piquante face to advantage. Her garments were not only picturesque and becoming, but also clean, a quality not often found in Bulgaria; altogether she looked like a plate from an illustrated book of costumes. Her complexion was light and spotless, her bare hands were white and shapely. When walking she swung her arms like a man. She was an inveterate cigarette-smoker; she liked cigars when she could get them, and did not disdain a pipe; she could drink slivovitz with the best of Milan's subjects. She had a predilection for men with ready cash, and would snub a poor devil unmercifully. She was a splendid rider, could drive a three-horse cart in a manner to make an official of the Cruelty to Animals Society take out his note-book, could work a Danube skiff like a professional sprat-catcher, fence like a German student, handle rifle and revolver like a prairie scout. For concentrated essence of vanity, conceit, and sublime impudence she has no equal in my experience.

This lady was—laugh not, dear reader!—a nurse. I swear to you I am perfectly serious; she was, if you please, a professional Sister of Mercy.

She was Servian by birth, Austrian on the father's side; was called Marie by the Bulgarians, Mariam by the Turks; and had served in the War of 1876 on her own side, though history is conveniently silent as to her abilities and perform-

ances. All I know is that she had quarrelled with her people, who had escorted her across the frontier. She had offered her services to the Turks, but the ungallant surgeon-in-chief of Osman's army would have none of her. She lived in Widdin town, had occasional access to the fort and interviews with men in authority, and was not allowed to pass beyond the fortifications unless furnished with a permit. All this makes me think that she was utilised as a spy. A fortnight later she was sent under escort to Philippopolis; why, I know not. Report said that the positions of guard and captive were completely reversed by the time the party arrived at its destination. I have read that in 1885, when East Roumelia rebelled against the Porte, a cigarette-smoking, spirit-drinking, formidably armed Servian damsel on horseback made herself conspicuous in the streets of Philippopolis. I wonder if it was Marie?

This worthy member of the Society of St. John walked between Captain Chock and Doctor Schmidt, talking to the latter in a condescending and cursory manner and smiling at the former, showing her teeth. As they had no other tongue in common, this language of smiles of encouragement and grunts of approbation was all the conversation that passed between the pretty Servian and the ugly Briton.

My neighbour said: 'Ask the mad Englishman to join us; he is rich, and will pay your bill.' Whereupon I issued an invitation to the trio, which was accepted by the gentlemen, declined by the lady, who had just dined; but she was condescending enough to say that she would keep us company. She seated herself on the edge of a table which the soldiers had brought for serving the dishes, swung her shapely legs with the regularity of pendulums, displaying a pretty lace petticoat, and expressed vehement regret that the silly fort regulations forbade smoking in this particular spot.

Hardly had we commenced with the soup when a fat pasha took it into his stupid head to step up to the parapet with his telescope. Spiteful fate would have it that he selected the only spot from which our table was visible.

His broad back, bulging stern, and O-shaped little legs presented a delightful picture.

Immediately there was silence.

The *yüzbashi* whispered: 'He is the greediest pig in Rumili' (Turkey-in-Europe). 'Invite him, and he will come, as he always does when he can get a blow-out gratis; then we shall be quite safe, as he will be responsible.'

I received a nod of approval from the *kaim-makam*, went up to the pasha, saluted, and said:

'May your Excellency have a long life! I am an Englishman in the service of the Padishah, and this is the natal day of my sovereign, the Queen of England' (which was a wicked lie); 'will your Excellency graciously condescend to partake of the miserable fare which your Excellency's abject servant has spread upon yonder humble table?'

One grave look at the table, one deliberate sniff of the soup's delicious aroma, and the fat Pasha, solemnly and reverently, made answer and said:

'I will.'

The guests rose: the soldiers saluted, the Englishman touched his cap, the German doffed his antiquated tile (an interesting architectural relic of the Renaissance period); the Pasha took the seat of honour, and began to gobble up the soup with alarming vehemence. Marie had disappeared; partial to young lieutenants with ready money, she had a holy horror of pashas. I heard her parting 'Do svidania,' which is Servian for *au revoir*.

The men in the courtyard had finished their labours and were resting in the tents; the gunners and the infantry in the protected way were dozing; only the measured tread of the sentries on the outer wall broke the sleepy summer-noon silence. Above me was the glorious dark blue sky; the sunshine flooded the river and the landscape beyond with molten gold, and a thousand diamonds glittered on the crests of the Danube's gentle billows. A beautiful cooling breeze from the north fanned me; the waves broke themselves lazily against the stone embankment, and whispered softly

and sweetly, as if of peace on earth and goodwill to men. High in the heavens rose a lark, and its triumphant strains were borne to me on the wings of the wind, singing of glory to the Creator for this beautiful corner of His fair earth, which lay spread out before my enchanted vision.

And this was war ! The declaration of hostilities was a fortnight old, and we were as yet in perfect peace. Not a shot had been fired with hostile intent. My sword was innocent of gore ; my revolver-bullets had hit nothing more animated than the hideous wooden Russian who served as a target. Eleven weeks more were to elapse before either received its baptism.

Presently the sailing-boat I have mentioned came down to a level with Calafat, close to the Roumanian shore, and hoisted the Austrian flag, a black double eagle on yellow ground ; a boat manned by soldiers was rowed alongside, and cast off again after a brief interval, whilst the sailer floated down stream like a beautiful white dove.

We had consumed the second course, capital river-fish obtained in town and cooked in the fort kitchen ; the third (mutton and rice), the fourth (maize porridge),⁴⁶ both from the fort, the latter served with honey, and the fifth (lovely pastry and sweets from the confectioner's) had followed the same downward career. I had paid the bills, to which Captain Chock generously contributed half ; the officers had left us, having duties to attend to ; we four—that is, the Englishman, the Doctor, the Pasha, and I—were discussing coffee, and brandy from the Captain's flask, of which latter the Turk also partook, saying that the hekim had so ordered it.

I cannot state the exact time, but estimate the moment at 4 P.M., when a gun was fired on our left, followed soon by other reports on both sides of the river—that is, in Calafat and in the extreme north-east of Widdin, where also the monitors were at that moment. After this sharp outbreak the fire ceased.

I cannot describe to you the sudden, overwhelming change wrought in my surroundings by these shots. Within the

twinkling of an eye the fort was like a disturbed ants' nest. Soldiers seemed to spring out of the ground, commands and bugle-calls came from all sides in terrifying confusion; but only a few minutes of indescribable turmoil, and Fort Widdin was ready for the fray. Every semblance of peace had vanished, and the grim reality of war stamped each detail of the scene as far as my eyes could travel.

The artillerymen stood by their guns (long since trained to bear on Calafat), waiting only for the order to commence fire; the infantry were behind the parapet, rifles in hand, ready to repel a boat attack. Orderlies and aides-de-camp ran to and fro; pashas and their staffs strained their eyes, and numerous telescopes were directed towards the rebellious neighbour. The terrace was crowded with men—some hundreds within my line of vision. Everyone was at his post, preconcerted long ago; for elaborate instructions had been issued even before the declaration of war. The first few moments of unavoidable confusion over, order, coolness, silence and readiness reigned supreme.

The first shot had been fired by us (from Ghazi Bair Tabiya, the most north-easterly of our redoubts, and the one nearest to Calafat), partly by way of test or challenge, to which Calafat immediately responded, partly as a sign to the other batteries. In the beginning it was only Yeni Tabiya, Ghazi Bair Tabiya, and the monitors which fired; but soon the whole river-front was engaged.

The Pasha had vanished; the Doctor doffed his hat and ran away, looking like a scared cockroach; Captain Chock and I glanced at each other across the deserted table in blank surprise. The arabjis appeared who had served us, and whom the Captain and I had tipped handsomely, and in the twinkling of an eye every trace of the harmless orgie had vanished. The Captain exclaimed excitedly:

'You'll excuse me, sir, but there's copy to be had for my paper. I'm off. Take my advice, and hurry back to your battalion; it is, perhaps, not necessary, but it'll look well, and will be placed to your credit. Pardon the liberty, but

I'm an old soldier. Thanks for hospitality. Good afternoon.'

He stuck his formidable pencil behind his ear, waved his note-book over his head, cried 'Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!' opened his parasol, pulled his cap over one ear, and was off.

At that moment a gun was fired in Ghazi Bair Tabiya, and immediately afterwards the earth was shaken by a terrific discharge of the batteries on the river-side. I ran to the gate as fast as the thick smoke would allow. The sentry stopped me, and called the officer on duty; having satisfactorily explained my business to the latter, I was allowed to proceed. I hurried through the streets, which were crowded with trembling inhabitants—Turks, Jews, Bulgarians—race-hatred and fanaticism having disappeared before the one common consideration: safety of life and home. Numerous windows were broken; a filigree-worker's hovel had tumbled on its palsied foundations; the vagrant dogs howled in nerve-straining unison. At that moment the guns were silent; a little later there was a vigorous discharge from Calafat and a terrific response from Widdin; after that the fire was continued in a less furious and spasmodic manner for a hour or two, and then all was over for the day. The expected Roumanian boat attack did not take place—in fact, shelling excepted, there was no attack from Calafat until after the fall of Plevna. On this day (May 8) only slight damage was done to one of our redoubts and to the river-front, and there were no serious casualties. In Widdin two insignificant fires broke out, and the top of a minaret tumbled into a back yard and killed a dead dog; the trembling of the ground had caused the tower to fall. I believe not many of our shells reached the enemy, but they had the desired moral effect: they proved to the foe that we were ready for the fray, prevented him from attacking, and neutralised for seven months a hostile division.

I thought for a moment of looking up Doris and comforting her: but 'Duty before love,' said I. I pushed my way through the panic-stricken crowd, lost myself in the crooked

streets, and finally gained the gates, where I had again to state my business to the guard. Once free of the town I hurried along the level road, already tramped by fugitives, doing the two and a half miles in little more than half an hour, and arriving in camp at 5.30 or 6, *i.e.* three hours before my leave was up.

The first shot fired from Calafat was, politically and historically, a fact of the gravest importance, one that shaped the course of events for decades, probably centuries to come. It dispelled all doubts as to Roumania's attitude; it broke the ties that bound the vassal State to the sovereign country: it signified for the Widdin army the commencement of hostilities, the certainty of being separated only by a river from an enemy ready and eager to fight. It meant for Roumania independence from the Porte, her mistress during three and a half centuries, and (in any case temporary) subjugation to the Czar's will; it meant for Turkey another enemy to reckon with; for Russia, an only too anxious ally to count upon.

In camp two brigades stood ready to proceed to any point of the river-bank. The battalions had been formed in marching order; the men squatted on the ground, arms piled; the officers were anxiously waiting for the command to start. The major looked at me approvingly; the captain (asleep on a convenient stone) opened his little green eyes, blinked them, and continued his siesta. I took my station at the head of my squad. Presently I was bidden to the brigadier, to whom I gave an account of what I had seen in Widdin. We waited, but no orders came. Calafat and Widdin were quiet, like two neighbours, friends for years, who have had a few words and have shaken hands. Even the most zealous officers grew tired and sat or lay down. Towards 9 P.M. the order was given to go back to the tents and turn in. Dispirited, we sought our beds; sleep was out of the question. Afterwards we got so used to the cannonade that it disturbed our minds no longer; we would hardly listen to it. We had, however, a good many false alarms and starts.

A few days later I had my first outpost duty, my company being sent to a hill five miles north-west of the camp, five miles south-west of the Danube, and seven miles south-east of the Servian frontier, whence we could overlook twenty-five miles of the river and fifteen miles of the Servian boundary-line. The eminence is 400 feet above Danube level, and commands a fine view on all sides. My squad bivouacked for some days on different spots of the slope, near various hamlets, one of which was called Ghinzova. I made the Bulgarian inhabitants serve us good hot dinners. I used to try persuasion and kindness first—for instance, kissing the children; if these were of no avail (not often), I used the compulsion which I was fully justified in employing; but I checked rigorously every approach towards brutality. The Roumanians had run away. We knocked at many a house, and, getting no reply, beat the doors in, and found a good many things likely to be of service to us, such as blankets, bolsters, utensils, &c. I strictly forbade plunder, which was, indeed, considered a serious crime; for instance, in one house we found hidden a valuable clock and other things; we took nothing but the pitchers which we had come for. At night the company had three outposts, each of half a squad, and each setting a dozen single sentries. We lieutenants had the duty of inspecting the latter, a disagreeable task in the darkness, which caused me many a nasty stumble and a scratched face. Nothing occurred. We were glad when another company relieved us, and we could go back to our comfortable tents. Then we had for a week the duty to provide part of the camp sentries, and I was several times in charge of the guard at one of the gates, where I had to use all my wits to prevent unauthorised persons from entering. There were always scores of claimants for admission—pedlars, messengers, petitioners of some kind or other, complainants, beggars, gipsy performers, vagabonds. No ceremony was shown to the latter: the butt-end of a rifle in the fleshy part of the back, and they generally slunk away like the curs they were; if any persisted, extemporised floggings did the

work effectually. I had to arrest several too anxious claimants, who were all dismissed with the caution not to do it again, save one young Bulgarian, who, savouring of a spy, was detained for several days, and finally liberated. The women, having something to sell or wishing to see someone, were particularly difficult to get rid of ; many a pretty girl tried to bribe me with honeyed words and attempted caresses ; but I thought of Doris and was kiss-proof. When this duty was over my company was not called upon for several weeks. Towards the middle of June we had a fortnight's bivouacking on the river-bank between Flortin and Widdin, not far from Koshava ; but again the record of our performances was a blank, except that we captured a Roumanian fishing-boat, with nothing more formidable in it than a net of freshly caught fish, which had probably broken loose from her moorings on the other side. We ate the fish and chopped the craft up for firewood, after having utilised it for a picnic on a small uninhabited island, where we had a jollification, in a jungle of reeds and weeds, within 500 yards of the hostile shore. A detachment of Roumanian soldiers passed us on the opposite bank ; we waved our fezes and handkerchiefs to them, and through the glasses I saw them return the courtesy. We bathed daily in the river, and caught excellent fish. The mosquitoes began to be troublesome ; but after a week or two of nocturnal torment they deserted me, and my face resumed its legitimate proportions. Possibly the fact that my skin underwent a curing and tanning process—my complexion was mahogany—was the cause of the insects' change of front. We came across an apiary in a cottager's deserted garden ; a man who understood bees drove them away by exploding cartridges, and procured us a supply of lovely honey. Talking of insects, I must allude to the Bulgarian flea, which has no equal for voracity and vivacity. The excitement of a Bulgarian flea-hunt is, in my experience, rivalled only by that of the chase after a wolf before Plevna in November.

After our return to camp my company had no more outpost duties until we came to Plevna.

I must mention our sentry dogs, of which the Inova camp had nearly a hundred, some few trained for the purpose ; the majority belonged to the canine 'submerged tenth' which are a speciality of Turkey, and had attached and educated themselves. They were of a variety of breeds, mongrels of a dozen crossings, and made capital sentries. A volume could be written on the intelligence of the Ottoman quadruped loafers ; for instance, they have a distinct organisation and administration, which is quite as wonderful and a good deal more sensible than the British Constitution. I could tell scores of anecdotes of the astonishing sagacity of our sentry dogs.

Ibrahim and his colour squad were exempt from outpost and sentry duties. I became much attached to Jack Seymour, and in youthful enthusiasm and love of romance we swore eternal friendship.

The shelling had been renewed every second or third day, sometimes for a few minutes, sometimes for hours. The damage done to the fortifications was always immediately repaired ; for we had plenty of engineers, mechanics, and workmen in Widdin. Not so with the town. Fires broke out frequently, sometimes several simultaneously ; for want of a regular fire-brigade the soldiers were called upon to quench the conflagrations. Once (on June 3) matters grew so serious that troops were sent from camp, among them my battalion. The fire had been mastered by the time we arrived (towards dusk), but the cannonade continued till 9 P.M. A shell burst 100 feet from me, and killed a Turkish woman and her baby who had come out to have a look at us. I obtained an hour's leave and hastened to Doris, whose house had not been struck. The old man was frightened almost out of his wits, the girl brave and confident ; her affection for her grandfather and the way she comforted and caressed him were beautiful and touching. I pointed out to them that they were tolerably safe, being sheltered by a tall, solid mosque ; that the only danger to which they were exposed came from the minaret, should it tumble. Up to

the time of my leaving Widdin no harm had come to them. When I mentioned business, the old Jew shook himself, and was at once on the alert. I exchanged a fifty-lira draft on Constantinople for cash, and bought a ring of him, which I presented to Doris. Needless to say we kissed and swore eternal love, as young people will do as long as this globe travels its orbit.

Widdin looked deserted ; a general exodus had commenced with, and even before, the cannonade. Files of trucks and barrows passed the camp almost daily, laden with household goods ; families who could obtain no vehicular accommodation carried their belongings on their backs. Many a time have I seen a strapping Bulgarian smoking his pipe and burdened with nothing more formidable than, perhaps, a clock or a crucifix, whilst his wife groaned under a cartload of boxes, bundles, bedding, and babies. I suppose that is Christian. A Mahomedan would not do it. The fugitives took shelter in the villages out of shell range, or camped out ; near Inova there was quite a colony of huts, made of broken-up furniture, sacking, mud, or whatever material might be handy. It was mostly the Bulgarians who fled ; Turks and Jews stayed, trusting in the Mushir to protect them. The numerous Roumanians in the villages around Widdin decamped without exception ; I suppose they crossed the river secretly at night, by means of rafts, and joined their countrymen, or did so *viâ* Servian territory.

Nearly every street had a partially wrecked house, and there was not a whole pane in Widdin ; but, taking it altogether, the cannonade was more formidable in its aspect than in its effect. Towards the end of June the shelling on both sides grew lax and spasmodic, the leaders recognising its uselessness. I believe it ceased after we had left. I do not think we did much damage to Calafat. There were several fires, but not so many as in Widdin, and no serious ones. I have already mentioned that Calafat lies on a higher level than its opponent.

We had not many casualties, perhaps 100 killed and

wounded during the whole time, including peaceful inhabitants. The camps were out of range. Altogether, the result of two months' shelling was, on both sides, *nil*.

Meanwhile the soldiers began to grow disheartened at their uselessness and inactivity, and the dissatisfaction with those who compelled us to be idle, *i.e.* the Council of War in the capital and the Serdar Ekrem in Shumla, became intense. We were kept posted as to what was going on ; the news came from the superior officers downward, and was thus disseminated in camp. The papers also gave us information, though this was generally too stale and too one-sided to be of practical value. What had actually happened (as proved by later investigations) was this, although we in Widdin had, of course, to contend against many conflicting statements :

Firstly, as regards affairs in Europe.

Already, on April 16, Roumania had made a convention with Russia as to the passage of Russian troops through her territory, which had commenced with the day of the declaration of war. Braila and Galatz were occupied and fortified. On May 2 the Porte made it known to the vassal State that she considered the permission of passage granted to hostile troops as a declaration of rebellion ; whereupon Roumania proclaimed her independence, and manifested this by shelling Widdin with the Calafat batteries on and after May 8. On the 11th the Turkish ironclad *Lufti Djelil* was blown up on the Lower Danube. On May 14 the Grand Duke Nicholas, the Russian Commander-in-Chief in Europe, transferred his headquarters from Kishineff, in Bessarabia, to Ployetchi, in Roumania. By May 20 the northern Danube bank from the Kilia mouth to the Aluta was occupied by the Russians, whose forces (counting the reinforcements which arrived during June) consisted of nine corps and several cavalry divisions ; from the Aluta mouth upwards to Calafat stood the four Roumanian divisions. The Turks held the southern bank from the Sulina mouth upwards to Flortin, but their forces were numerically inferior to those

of their enemies ; behind this line they had, however, strong posts in Varna, Rasgrad, Shumla, Selvi, and Sofia. The Turkish General-in-Chief in Europe was Abdul Kerim Pasha, who had also special command of the forces in Eastern Bulgaria, and was subject to the Council of War in the capital, the Sultan being president of the latter. On May 22 Prince Charles proclaimed himself first independent Prince of Roumania ; but the Czar declined the Prince's offer of active co-operation, professing himself unable to comply with the conditions attached to the offer, viz. the bestowal of the royal crown and the supreme command of the armies about to operate in Bulgaria. On June 22 a Russian force under General Zimmermann crossed the Danube at Galatz by means of boats ; on the following day also at Braila ; occupied by June 26 Isaktcha, Tultcha, Babadagh, and Hirsova, and built a bridge at Braila. This army invaded subsequently the entire Dobrudcha, but did no more from first to last than neutralise a much smaller Turkish force in Varna. On June 27 a Russian detachment crossed the river at Simnitztza with boats, drove away the weak Turkish garrison of Sistova after a sharp encounter, and built the bridge which remained the chief means of communication between Roumania and the Russian armies in Bulgaria throughout the war. By July 3 the bridge was finished, and on the same day the invasion of Bulgaria commenced on a scale of considerable magnitude, following three directions : Firstly, eastward, where Biéla was occupied July 7 ; and on the 9th this army, under the Czarevitch (the late Czar, Alexander III.), reached the Black Lom almost without fighting, whilst cavalry pushed forward as far as Osmanbazar and Shumla. Secondly, southward, an army, under General Gourko, occupied Timnova, the ancient Bulgarian capital, on July 7, Selvi on the 9th—both of which were voluntarily evacuated by the Turks—and reached the foot of the Balkans on the 11th. Thirdly, westward, where a corps (the 9th) under General Krüdener proceeded towards Nikopoli. This latter is the force with which we shall have to deal, and which was defeated by Osman Pasha

on July 20. The Russian headquarters were transferred to Sistova on July 3, thence to Biéla on the 8th. Such was the position of things on the European field of campaign by July 12.

Secondly, as regards affairs in Asia.

On and shortly after April 24 the Russians entered Turkish territory at four points: General Oklobehio from Ozurgeti towards Batum; General Devel from Akhalklaki towards Ardahan; General Heiman (with whom was General Loris Melikoff, the Commander-in-Chief in Asia) from Alexandropol towards Kars; General Tergukasoff from Erivan towards Bayazid. The Turkish Commander-in-Chief in Asia was Moukhtar Pasha,⁴⁷ who had 60,000 men in Batum, Ardahan, Kars, Bayazid, and Erzerum, and 20,000 along the Persian frontier. The four Russian columns fared up to July 12 as follows: General Oklobehio beat a Turkish detachment near Khutsubani on May 11, and occupied Kintrishi on May 28, but was unable to do more. General Devel appeared on May 5 before Ardahan, defended by 10,000 men under Hussein Pasha. Finding himself too weak, he claimed the assistance of part of the third column, under General Heiman, who arrived at Pankis (south-east of Ardahan) on May 13, and took command of the forces operating against Ardahan, Loris Melikoff retaining command of the other portion of the third column. On May 14 Ardahan was invested, on the 16th, 17th, and 18th, shelled, stormed, and taken. The united second and part of the third column invested Kars on May 31. On June 9 the Grand Duke Michael took the supreme command of the Russian forces in Asia. From June 17 to June 23 Kars was shelled. On June 21st and 22nd Moukhtar was victorious near Elbar in an engagement with Melikoff; and on the 25th the latter was again and totally defeated in the bloody battle of Sevin by Ismael Pasha, Moukhtar's second-in-command; whereupon the Serdar Ekrem marched with considerable forces for the relief of Kars, so that on July 9 the Russians saw themselves compelled to give up the siege and retreat to the frontier. The fourth column, under General

Tergukasoff, had taken Bayazid on April 28, and penetrated south as far as Arsib and Missum by May 8, thence westward to Karaklissa by the 15th. General Tergukasoff was victorious on June 16 and 21 near Delibaba; but on the news of the Russian defeat at Sevin he retired towards Bayazid, which was being besieged by Ali Kiamali Pasha with a force of 13,000 men. He liberated the garrison on July 10, but was driven back to Russian territory. Such was the position of things on the Asiatic field of campaign on July 12.

Thirdly, as regards the activity of the Ottoman fleet, commanded by Admiral Hobart Pasha.⁴⁸

A Turkish squadron bombarded Poti on the 5th, and Sukhum Kalé on May 12, which latter was taken on the 16th. Troops were landed at various points, and by May 31 the coast between Capes Adler and Drandy was in Turkish possession, whilst the Mahomedan populations of Abchasia, Kutais, and Kuban rebelled against the Russian Government. On June 1 General Alchasoff took the command in the threatened districts, and was victorious on the same day at Sotcha, June 13 at Ilori, 23rd at Merguli, 27th at Oltchomchiri; but Sukhum Kalé, the most important town of the coast, remained in Turkish hands, whilst the number of rebels increased daily (it reached by the end of November, 175,000). Such was the position of things on the shores of the Black Sea by July 12.

To sum up (and this was, practically, the average which we in Widdin drew from many contradictory and parti-coloured statements): In Europe the enemy had been uniformly fortunate, and was invading Bulgaria unhindered; in Asia, after the first quick and cheap successes, he had lost a big battle (Sevin), and had been driven back to the frontier-line on all points; whilst great hopes were being built upon the rebellion of the Russian Mahomedans and the activity of the splendid Ottoman fleet, commanded by an Englishman, in spite of the inability of the Turks to retain all the conquered positions. But we in Widdin had to do only with

affairs in Europe, and the unchecked invasion of the Empire's fairest province made us grind our teeth and utter curses loud and deep. It stands to reason that the Widdin army, the best of the country next to Suleiman Pasha's Montenegro corps, did not relish looking on idle whilst the enemy was having it all his own way. Inactivity is more unnerving than hardship, and a lost battle generally demoralises the on-lookers even more than those who have actually been beaten.

Suleiman Pasha's army (forty-four battalions) was ordered from Montenegro to the Balkans on July 1. It proceeded to Antivari, thence on July 15 in twenty-five steamers to Enos and Dédé Agach, where it arrived on the 21st, and took train for Adrianople. Skeleton garrisons were left behind on the Montenegrin frontier.⁴⁹

It became known in camp that the Mushir had submitted to the Council of War plans for a flank attack upon the Russian forces invading Bulgaria. Sistova had fallen and Nikopoli was threatened. Osman wisely recognised that Widdin had lost much of its strategical importance, being now an isolated outpost, in which an army of 30,000 men, in splendid condition and anxious to fight, was retained in dispiriting idleness in order to keep a single hostile division in check. The imbecility of Mahmoud Damad and Company and the timidity of Abdul Kerim surpass comprehension. The latter feared a Roumanian attack upon Flortin and a Servian one at Adlié; but these considerations should not have induced him to condemn Osman's fine army in its entirety to inactivity. Servia had not even declared war yet, and was in nowise prepared for it. The same culpable hesitation prevented him from opposing the Russian crossing at Sistova and Gourko's march southward: he was afraid the enemy would meanwhile effect a passage at Giurgevo.

Early on July 8 it was made known that a march eastward was in contemplation. It was reported that the Mushir had been in personal telegraphic consultation with the Padishah during the night. The joy of the troops was great, and every man had but one concern: lest his battalion

might, unfortunately, be among those left behind to protect Widdin. Our preparations were made with method and promptness. There was not much to be done ; ever since the declaration of war we had been in perfect condition to take the field. Within twenty-four hours we were ready to start ; but we had some days more of uncertainty and suspense to go through.

On the 11th the Mushir's plans were communicated to the officers : To march with half the Widdin army to Nikopoli, where Hassan Hairi Pasha commanded ten battalions, and which was threatened with an attack (from Krüdener's 9th Corps) ; to unite ourselves with these ten battalions, which were to evacuate Nikopoli, as it had lost its importance since the fall of Sistova (being now, to borrow from chess, an isolated, unprotected advanced pawn) ; to attack the enemy's flank between Biéla and Tirnova and break through his thin line ; to form a junction with the East Bulgarian Corps, and to offer a decisive battle. Should Osman not be successful in breaking through the hostile line, Lovdcha was given as the point of retreat, as well as the starting-point for future offensive operations. After two and a half months of dreary inactivity, a week after Osman had made it, his proposal received at last the supreme sanction—just too late, as events proved.

Major Taki told me that the Mushir had submitted, between April 24 and July 11, five elaborately worked-out projects for utilising his army for an offensive movement, of which only the last had received a tardy approval. Twice he had been left without a reply !

Arrangements connected with supply kept us in Widdin for two days longer. Early on July 12 marching orders were given out, and the composition and arrangement of the column were fixed ; but the hour of departure was left uncertain. To my gratification, my battalion was among those commanded to join the expeditionary force. At noon there was a parade of the latter and inspection by the Mushir.

Twelve battalions of infantry, a squadron of regular cavalry, and a field battery remained in Widdin with the fort artillery, under Mehemed Isset Pasha. Four battalions of Osman's army had been distributed among the following places: Rakovitza, Bregovo, Adlié (*alias* Kula), Flortin, Artzar, Biélogradelik, Berkovitza; three were in Lom Palankah, and three in Rahova, which places had also their fort artillery; lastly, three were between Rahova and the spot where the Isker flows into the Danube, near Beshti.

The Mushir's column counted 19 battalions, 6 squadrons, 9 batteries, or 12,000 men with 54 guns.*

This gives the total of the Widdin army at forty-four battalions, viz.:

19 marching on Nikopoli
 12 in Widdin
 4 along the north-western frontiers
 3 in Lom Palankah
 3 in Rahova
 3 near Beshti

Total 44 battalions.

After the termination of the Servian War Osman concentrated sixty battalions; sixteen he had to send to East Bulgaria in the beginning of the year; thus he had forty-four left.

In the afternoon of the 12th I obtained an hour's leave, borrowed a horse, and rode *ventre à terre* to town, where I took a hasty farewell from heartbroken, weeping Doris.

At nine in the evening an order was issued fixing four next morning as the time of departure.

During the night of July 12-13 we slept for the last time in the Widdin tents, ready to start at daybreak.

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

CHAPTER V

FROM WIDDIN TO PLEVNA : A SEVEN DAYS' FORCED
MARCH

JULY 13 TO 19, 1877

WE were up at sunrise on Friday, July 13, and had our last meal in Widdin camp—hot meat and rice—in anticipation of the fatigue and hurry of a forced march. Each soldier carried a week's biscuit rations.

The day opened cloudless, and promised to be as scorching as its predecessors. It surpassed anticipations. Throughout the march the heat was intense and uninterrupted.

At four the first battalions left camp; mine followed an hour later. The troops remaining behind bade us an enthusiastic and envious farewell.

At seven we came to the Artzar road, the place of tryst, where we met the cavalry and some battalions coming from town, and the artillery from the Smerdan camp. The Mushir and his staff joined us here, and the column was formed. There was a delay of some hours.

A party from Widdin had come to bid us good-bye. Among them was Doris, who gave me a flask of Cognac, a packet of eatables, and a note with the words, 'Gott beschütze Dich.' I felt sentimental. That was the last I saw of pretty Doris of Widdin.

At nine the van started. My battalion was in the rear, with four other battalions, in charge of the carts and pack-horses.*

* For arrangement of column, see Appendix.

We took the road which leads from Widdin to Artzar along the Danube. Some tramps and vagabonds followed us, but were dispersed by the regulars, several being knocked down and wounded. The Circassians could not be trusted to do this, as they were always in sympathy with marauders. Later during the march some of these creatures were killed for plundering soldiers who had dropped from fatigue.

As we approached Vidbol we heard the report of guns. We found that it proceeded from Roumanian batteries established on the opposite bank, which had shelled us without doing harm : the distance was too great. When we arrived on the heights of Vidbol I had a view of the winding column, which was ten miles long and presented a striking and imposing picture. The Roumanians continued their pyrotechnic amusements until the last man had passed out of range ; we saw the shells striking the water and the mudbank.

At eight in the evening we arrived without mishap in Artzar, where we bivouacked for the night. Here we heard that, instead of continuing by the Lom Palankah river-road, according to the Mushir's original intention, we were to proceed by the Topolovatz path, the same by which I had come two and a half months before, so as not to give the Roumanians a chance to discharge their virgin guns at us.

Hitherto we had travelled by a good road, with a constant supply of water, and had experienced no inconvenience, save that arising from the heat. The hardships commenced in earnest next day, and ended only when we struck the Rahova road in Gorna Netropolić, ten miles west of Plevna ; for we travelled by footpaths and bridle-paths, not on regular roads (except the short stretch from Topolovatz to Krivodol), in a bare, shelterless country, where water is scarce.⁵⁰

The van started again at daybreak (July 14), we at five. The men had to drag the guns and carts up the hills. The heat became intense ; the dust choked us.

Between Artzar and Plevna we in the rear had only bis-

cuits to eat, except what little we could obtain by persuasion or compulsion in the villages, as the men were too tired to cook when we arrived at the halting-places. The rear was the worst off, for when we passed through a hamlet there was often not a crust left. The Turkish inhabitants were kind-hearted and obliging. At Sergeant Bakal's recommendation I abstained from fruit. We slept in the open air throughout the march.

From Topolovatz to Krivodol we travelled by the Biélogradchik-Lom Palankah road. At five in the afternoon we came to Krivodol, ten miles south of Lom Palankah, on the Lom, where we had in any case an abundance of water. After having had a bath and a few biscuits I lay down, but was roused an hour later by the major, who told us officers that the Mushir had received despatches from Constantinople, stating that the Russians had crossed the Balkans and were threatening Kazanlik⁵¹ and Yeni Zagra; that we were to break up at dusk and march all night.

These fatal news, and worse still which arrived later, were communicated to the troops. The Balkans lost, and that almost without a fight—the Empire's bulwark, believed to be impregnable, gone! We could hardly credit it.

It was Gourko's audacious passage of the Balkans by bridle-paths on July 12 and 13 which the Padishah referred to. This bold feat enabled the Russians to attack the weak Turkish force in the Shipka Pass from the rear, drive it off, and occupy this important defile, from which they were never dislodged. Not a Suleiman's impetuosity, not the sacrifice of the best army Turkey has ever had, could dispossess them.

We started at 10 P.M. and marched throughout the night, morning, and forenoon (July 15). The tramp through the darkness was interesting and romantic. At noon we reached Vultchiderma, on the Chibritza, where we halted, almost dead with fatigue. The main body, unhampered by train, had arrived some hours before the rear. After having had a drink of water we all fell down where we stood, and were

soon in a death-like slumber. Sergeant Bakal was the only man of my squad who did not appear to be affected. To his foresight, care, and wondrous powers of endurance it is due that my men did not become disheartened. We had not even a deserter in the rear, for his watchful eye was ever open. Altogether, desertion was a rare occurrence.

When I woke up, some time in the evening, I was told that the Mushir had received a despatch from Abdul Kerim, saying that Nikopoli was being attacked by a strong force; that the utmost speed was necessary, not only to save Nikopoli, but also Plevna and Lovdcha, the former of which was occupied by Atouf Pasha with three battalions, four guns, and 200 Circassians, the latter only by a few companies and some irregulars; that the Mushir had decided to make straight for Plevna. I do not know whether Osman despaired of being in time to save Nikopoli, or whether he intended to form a junction with Atouf and then attack Krüdener from the rear.

This was, I believe, the first time I heard the name 'Plevna' mentioned during the campaign. Little did I think that it would become as famous as Sebastopol or Metz; that I should spend nearly five months of dangers and privations in helping to defend it for, and against, strangers. Later, in Russia, I learnt that the Czar had jokingly consulted a gipsy before the war as to its probable result, and that the oracle had said: 'Beware of Plevna!' Also, military men in high position are reported to have uttered the same solemn warning.⁵²

Our hardships had been great hitherto, but worse were to follow; for now we were to pass through a country which is quite a Sahara in its dearth of water, at least during a hot summer.

At midnight three battalions (1st Regiment, Col. Emin Bey) started in advance for Plevna, to assist Atouf Pasha in holding the town until the arrival of the bulk of the force. These reached their destination on the 18th, thus doing the distance from Widdin to Plevna (115 miles) in six days, an

average of nineteen miles a day—a splendid performance, which, under the circumstances, would have done credit to the Prussian infantry's 'monkey-like quickness,' as a furious Austrian writer expressed it, in 1866.

We started at four in the morning (July 16), with a twenty-four mile stage, almost waterless, before us. The Mushir's able and energetic dispositions were now evident. At points arranged upon beforehand a mounted party with three-horse carts, going in advance of the column, established tubs with drinking-water. Vehicles requisitioned in the villages accompanied the rear, to pick up the men who had dropped *en route*. The extreme tail was formed by regular horsemen, with carts, to take stragglers from the rearguard and protect them against marauders and Christians, who were always ready to kill and steal. On both flanks was cavalry; for the Cossacks had swarmed as far as Rahova, Altimir, and Vratza. Cooking-parties were sent in advance, and when the main body arrived at pre-arranged spots they found a meal waiting; but we in the rear, lagging behind with the lumbering train, did not come in for this benefit. A worse feature was that when we reached the water-tubs they were generally empty, or filled with a fluid grown so putrid that we officers had to prevent the men from drinking. But Sergeant Bakal managed capitally for my squad; it would occupy too long to enumerate his dispositions and precautions. Also, the experience which Seymour, Tereb, and I had gained during the Bellova-Widdin tramp (child's play compared to the one under discussion) stood us in good stead. It was a wonder to me how my eighteen summers could carry the burden of this dreadful march; only once did I feel faint, and I was not in the least footsore, thanks to frequent grease embrocations. Jack also was tolerably well; but Ibrahim had a long ride on a cart. Lieutenant Hardar displayed no trace of even fatigue, and the captain marched with closed eyes, half asleep, but perfectly hale. There were a dozen stragglers in my company by the time we reached Gorna Netropolié, but they rejoined us there.

Five or six men of the main body, whom the rearguard found among those lying by the side of the track, it was not necessary to pick up: they were dead. There was not the time nor had we the strength to bury them; after having taken their money and arms, we left their bodies to the tender mercies of thieves and Christians. Jack and I used to utter a short prayer, to the captain's amusement, who said, 'You will soon weary of that'; but Hardar and Tereb looked at us approvingly, and the men liked it. A fortnight later I had seen thousands of human corpses without having one pious thought.

The packhorses grew very tired; the oxen were worse, bleeding in the feet, and hardly able to crawl along. Many beasts fell from fatigue, and had to be left to their fate.

Of the men's spirits I cannot judge: firstly, because we were all too exhausted to betray any mental characteristics, good, bad, or indifferent; secondly, because I was too tired and too miserable to make observations. We trudged on in silence, without jokes, stories, or songs. The major formed, once or twice, the eight drummers of his four companies into a band, to which some amateurs with tin whistles were added; but the former fell down with fatigue, and the fifes got choked with dust, and after half an hour only one drummer was left, who continued mechanically, in his draggletail wretchedness, to mark every second step by a faint beat, without knowing it. What a pity and shame it was that we had no music! This incident reminded me vividly of a cheap steamboat trip which I had made from Hamburg to Heligoland. The skipper had engaged a strong brass band to keep up the passengers' spirits; but the musicians were sea-sick before the excursionists, and at last there was only a solitary trombone left, who continued to play his deep, groaning staccato notes marking the commencement of the bars, oblivious, in his bilious misery, of the fact that melody and harmony had long since become disabled! I laughed as I thought of this occurrence, and presently I began to dream with open eyes, and to wander:

I fancied that I was pacing the steamer's deck, hardly able to keep upright in the ship's swaying motion ; I said to myself, ' How hot it is here, and what a fool am I not to get away from the engines towards the breeze on the bridge and in the bow ! ' But, try as I might, I could not reach those havens of delicious coolness ; and at last I should have fallen, had not Bakal seized me. Doris's Cognac restored my senses.

Towards midnight we came to Altimir, on the Skit, more dead than alive, where we bivouacked for the night. Our sufferings during the preceding stage from heat, dust, fatigue, thirst, hunger (we could not swallow the dry, tasteless biscuits), had been awful. Next morning (July 17) the soldiers were still in such a state of exhaustion that the departure was deferred till the afternoon. At 4 P.M. we started, refreshed after our long rest, and arrived at midnight in Keniéja.

At this spot two items of grave news reached us :

Firstly, a battalion from Rahova and two battalions stationed originally west of Nikopoli had been found waiting for the column ; the latter had been driven from their positions, with considerable loss, by part of the Russian force which had attacked Nikopoli two days before (July 15). We heard from them that Nikopoli was being furiously shelled and stormed, and was in a precarious condition. This reinforcement, with the three battalions and four guns found in Plevna, brought our force up to twenty-five battalions and fifty-eight guns, which was our strength in the battle of July 20.

Secondly, we heard in the night from Circassians that Lovdcha had been occupied by the enemy on July 16. I was told that Osman had been much upset by these news, as he considered Lovdcha of the utmost strategical importance. By the Mushir's orders the troops were informed of this misfortune, and of the great necessity now incumbent upon us to occupy Plevna, so as to save the Empire from total collapse.

We started in the early morning (July 18), and marched without interruption, through an absolutely bare and uninhabited country, until at midday we came to the river Isker, opposite Mahulleta. Here a piece of news awaited us worse than any we had yet heard: that Nikopoli had fallen on July 16, after a heroic resistance, and that its garrison of ten battalions, its commander, Hassan Hairi Pasha, its 400 heavy guns, and its enormous stores of grain, clothing, ammunition and arms were in the enemy's hands. These tidings were communicated to the troops, with the remark that the country was lying in its death-agonies, and that it was our sacred task to save it.

Major Taki told me that the Mushir was not much concerned about the fall of Nikopoli (save for the loss of its ten battalions, on which he had reckoned); that he had taken the news with remarkable equanimity, whilst those concerning Lovdeha had roused and grieved him deeply.⁵³

We heard also that the Russian headquarters had been transferred to Tirnova (July 17), and that the Czar had arrived there; that the Russians were invading East Roumelia and inciting the Christians to rebellion. In fact, at that moment Gourko was having it all his own way, and a terrible 'Hannibal ad portas' struck fear into all hearts at Adrianople and Constantinople.

There was no bridge across the Isker, the three battalions sent in advance having forded it.⁵⁴ We had no pontoon train. With submerged carts and boards placed across we constructed a bridge.

The Russians who had attacked Nikopoli being now free, it was to be presumed they would make at once for Plevna; the bulk of our column started, therefore, after only a few hours' rest. We of the rear took things more leisurely, on account of the extreme fatigue of the beasts. We started at 6 P.M., and arrived in Gorna Netropolié, ten miles west of Plevna, at midnight. Here the main body had already bivouacked, having encountered a company sent from Plevna with the news that Cossacks were swarming in the neigh-

bourhood, and that strong forces were approaching on the Nikopoli road. An order of the Mushir was read out, informing us that he expected to meet the enemy on the morrow. We were arranged in battle order, and slept arms in hand, with strong outposts. My company had no duty, except to furnish sentries for the ammunition. The probability of being under fire for the first time on the morrow did not prevent Jack and me from having a sound rest; but many men confessed next morning to having been sleepless, notwithstanding fatigue.

The bulk of the force started at 5 A.M. (July 19), the train some hours later. Owing to the speed with which the main body had marched, the tail of the column, with its crawling beasts of burden, was left far behind. During this last stage the rear was ready to repel an attack at a second's notice, but encountered no enemy. Later, we heard that the van had a skirmish with a detachment of Cossacks.

During the forenoon the Circassians attached to the rear-guard, who swarmed on both flanks, reported having come across a deserted Cossack camp two miles to the north. Some horse-carts were given to them, and, accompanied by a squadron of regulars (to prevent stealing), they returned to the spot and brought back the baggage of three squadrons. The Cossacks must have quitted their encampment in a desperate hurry, for almost everything was found. Prompted by Bakal, I advised the captain to obtain the water-bottles for his company, which he did. One was given to each man, so that we had now two flasks per person which came in handy during the battle of July 20. Bread-bags were also distributed.

This incident caused the delay of an hour. Another and longer delay was occasioned by cattle food running short; foraging parties had to be sent to the villages and farms.

At one o'clock we heard the report of guns, which never ceased from this moment until nightfall, and grew louder as we approached our destination. Fearing that the Russians would undertake an attack upon Plevna, and that ammu-

dition might run short, the colonel divided the train into two portions: the first, consisting of the packhorses with infantry ammunition, and the artillery ammunition carts, with three battalions (including mine), one and a half batteries, one squadron, and the Circassians, hurrying on in advance; the packhorses with luggage and stores, and the carts with their slow oxen, doubly slow because footsore, guarded by three battalions, one battery, and one squadron, lumbering on behind as best they could. Despite all our haste the tired, overburdened horses detained us; it was past 2 P.M. before we arrived at the stone bridge by means of which the Orkanyé-Plevna road crosses the Vid.⁵⁵ Behind a bend of this road—on the right of which is a hill covered with vineyards and orchards—we came in sight of Plevna, which, lying in a deep, fertile valley, presented a strikingly beautiful picture with its minarets and domes, its white houses, its patches of foliage, its background of hills with bold outlines. At 4 P.M. we marched, or rather dragged ourselves, into the town without having seen an enemy, whilst the batteries on the northern and eastern hills greeted us with their furiously growling acclamations. The other half of the rear arrived during the night.

The main body had reached Plevna between 9 A.M. and 2 P.M. The troops had not remained in town, save for a hurried meal, except two battalions to guard the place against surprises. The remainder had taken the positions on the hills previously assigned to them by Atouf Pasha, and approved of by the Mushir after reconnoitring the neighbourhood. Atouf had collected a large stock of victuals, cattle, and forage in Plevna, and hot meals had been prepared for the column. The Russian guns (six batteries) shelled the Turkish positions without doing harm, and no attack was undertaken. As soon as the Turkish batteries could be got into position they returned the fire. This artillery duel lasted eight hours, without result to either side. At nightfall the Russians retreated, bivouacking in four separate detachments near Ribina, Verbitza, Sgalevitza, and Tultchenitza.

The artillery of our Second Division had been increased by Atouf's four guns, and 100 Circassians were added to each division. The total of our force was now twenty-five battalions, nine and a half batteries, six squadrons ; or, 15,000 men with fifty-eight guns.*

Our left wing consisted of thirteen battalions and four batteries. (This includes my battalion and another, which took up positions early next morning.)

The centre was formed by five battalions, with one and a half batteries.

The right wing consisted of four battalions, two batteries, and the greater part of the cavalry.

The reserve was formed by three battalions and two batteries.

The left wing had an extreme outpost (two battalions and a battery) in front of Opanetz ; also, two battalions and a battery in and behind Bukova ; the bulk (nine battalions, including mine, and two batteries) was on the summit and the slope of the hill called Janik Bair. The whole of the left wing faced north.

The centre stood on the extreme east of the Janik Bair, a mile north-west of Grivitza, facing north, north-east, and east.

The right wing stood on the hills south of the Bulgareni road (the cavalry on the road itself), facing east and south-east.

The reserves stood on a hill immediately east of the town, close to headquarters. One battalion guarded the town by posting itself in its extreme south, where the Lovdcha high-road and the road from Krishin enter it. There were no troops inside the town during the battle, except sentries for the train.

I believe the tactical formations got somewhat mixed ; for instance, the other two battalions of my regiment were in the right wing ; here were also my brigadier and my colonel—in fact, Ahmed Hifzi Pasha commanded the right wing, whilst Adil Pasha led the left wing. I presume the cause

* For additional *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

was that the battalions as they arrived in Plevna were hurriedly directed to the most exposed and dangerous places, under the impression of the approach and the cannonade of the enemy, without reference to tactical formation. This was amended before the battle of July 30, when the entire First Division formed the left, and the entire Second the right, wing.

The distance of 115 miles between Widdin and Plevna had occupied the column seven days, or sixteen miles a day, a very creditable performance. We had ten deaths from exhaustion and 10 per cent. of invalids (all told), mostly foot-sore; the feet of some men were one ghastly wound; several, on removing their socks, tore off skin and flesh. The country through which we had travelled is partly gently undulating, partly flat, and undoubtedly pretty in many places; but its monotony grew wearisome. Heat, drought, and dust had robbed the landscape of the freshness of its tints; the merciless sunshine was a torture to the eyes, and we were too exhausted to be impressed by beauties of scenery, even if they had been of the highest order. We passed not a single important town, all the places which I have mentioned being villages or hamlets.⁵⁶ We found many traces of last year's rebellion, in the shape of ruins, deserted dwellings, and depopulated districts.

The colonel commanding the rear column rode to headquarters, established in a tent on a hill immediately east of Plevna, to obtain instructions. Meanwhile we lay down in the streets, and men of Atouf's battalions dealt out coffee, bread, and tobacco, and the remainder of the meal of meat and rice prepared for the main body. When the colonel returned, he brought us the welcome news that we were to stay in town during the night. Sergeant Bakal, in anticipation of this order, had gone on a tour of discovery through the streets, accompanied by other non-commissioned officers, and had spotted some deserted houses in the northern suburb, which the major selected for our night-quarters. An order was issued to the battalions of the rear that we

were to break up at dawn, to take a position in the expected line of attack, a battle being imminent. The sergeants obtained material for supper. The worst invalids (only three in my company, two so footsore as to be practically paralysed, one ill through exhaustion; all three recovered within a few days) were sent to the ambulances, and immediate steps were taken to ease and cure all men suffering in the feet. Next day my company left one other man in Plevna, so that we had four absentees in the battle. We went to the house assigned to us, beat the door in, and made ourselves comfortable, cannonade notwithstanding, prepared to start at a minute's notice to any part of the neighbourhood, should an attack be undertaken.

Plevna (Turkish), or Pleven (Bulgarian), counted in 1877 17,000 inhabitants, 10,000 of whom were Christians. Between July 9 and 20, 2,000 Mahomedans from the districts invaded by the Russians had taken refuge in the town, which contained also 200 soldiers wounded in the engagements near Sistova and Nikopoli. Four thousand Christians had fled.

The Tultchenitza (or Cayalidéré) brook flows through the town, whilst the Grivitza skirts its northern margin. The two streams unite two miles north-west of the town, and a mile farther north-west, near Opanetz, they empty their waters into the Vid, a tributary of the Danube.

Plevna is better built than any other Turkish town I have seen; yet here, too, there were the ruined and deserted houses, the palsied hovels, the waste spaces full of rubbish, which are a feature of the country. The filthy streets, badly paved or unpaved, and in wet weather impassable, the absence of sanitary arrangements, the heaps of offal, the thousand-and-one stench characteristic of urban Turkey, were worthily represented. The Tultchenitza served as a natural (and only) main drain. The town is built without any obvious plan; but the streets were wider and straighter, the houses better, than, say, in Widdin. There were some really nice buildings; for instance, the Konak of the kaim-makan,⁵⁷ erected, so I was told, on the site and with the material of

a Roman ruin. Many of the dwelling-houses, both Turkish and Bulgarian, were pretty, and charmingly situated in their gardens. The town had a civil hospital—Midhat Pasha's creation—presided over by a German doctor; two khans (inns), with something faintly resembling European hotel accommodation; a clock-tower, eighteen mosques (two or three of which were really beautiful), two Christian churches, a *rushdié* (military elementary school), eight ordinary elementary Turkish and five Bulgarian schools. In the neighbourhood there were some good *chiftliks* (farms).

Plevna was the administrative capital of a district, of which Nikopoli and Sistova were the other important places. It was on July 20, 1877—and on this fact I lay particular stress—an absolutely open town, there being no fortifications of any kind.⁵⁸

The town is surrounded by hills, those in the north-east and east being the highest. Between Bivolar and Verbitza they rise to 1,300 feet, a few miles beyond Grivitza to 1,000 feet, above sea-level. In the south the Tultchenitza flows through a deep, narrow, picturesque, rocky ravine with almost vertical banks. Directly north-east of the town there is a hill, perfectly bare, called Janik Bair ('bair' is hill), four miles long west to east, rising to 350 feet above the Plevna valley, its southern slope bordering upon the Bulgareni road between Plevna and Grivitza, which hill will play an important part in my narrative. The left bank of the Vid also is hilly; but here the altitude is below that of the right bank.

From whatever point of the compass Plevna is observed it presents a striking and pleasant picture, forming always the pretty foreground to a bold background of hills. These are in the north, east, and south-east bare, in the north-west, west, and south covered with vineyards, gardens, and orchards. Maize is much cultivated in the neighbourhood. The district is throughout agricultural.

Society, places of public recreation or amusement, institutions for the culture of art or science, public gardens,

promenades, did not exist in Plevna. The French traveller Lejean dismisses the town with the terse remark: 'Ville agréable, sans plus; au bout de quelques heures j'en avais assez,' which I can endorse as expressing to a nicety the average European's impression, unless he would fain be a storehouse of thoroughpaced German learnedness and longwindedness, like Kanitz ('Donau-Bulgarien').

The following five roads meet in Plevna, the figures denoting distances in miles to this town in a straight line: firstly, from Rustchuk (73) *viâ* Biéla (55) and Bulgareni (23); secondly, from Troyan (38) *viâ* Lovdcha (20); thirdly, from Sofia (83) *viâ* Orkanyé (55); fourthly, from Widdin (95) *viâ* Lom Palankah (75) and Rahova (40)⁵⁹; fifthly, from Nikopoli (24) *viâ* Breslianitza (10) and Chalisovat (8). I shall call these roads the Bulgareni, Lovdcha, Orkanyé, Rahova, and Nikopoli roads respectively.

The Plevna-Sofia road, a construction of Midhat Pasha, is wide, and paved throughout, and was considered the best road in European Turkey. It played a principal rôle in the military drama of the defence of Plevna. It crosses the Balkans by means of the Baba Konak Pass (also called Araba Konak, or Etropol Pass), one of the safest and most commodious of Balkan crossings. Etropol used to be the northern key to this pass; since the construction of the Orkanyé-Sofia road the town had decreased in importance.

The wire connected Plevna with Rahova and Widdin, with Lovdcha, and with Orkanyé and Sofia, thence with Constantinople. The other (northern and eastern) telegraph-lines had been cut by the Russians.

Midhat Pasha commenced, in 1875, a railway to Plevna from the spot where the Osma flows into the Danube, and where he intended to create a commercial emporium, to be called Port Sultanié, the ruins of which are still in existence. Material was bought and 20,000 workmen were engaged; but his conviction of high treason, in February 1877, put an end to the operations.

A reader of inquiring mind may find the following

distances in miles from Plevna in a straight line useful: Sistova 40, Selvi 37, Tirnova 57, Shumla 118, Silistria 144, Varna 170, Shipka 61, Kazanlik 68, Teteven 38, Etropol 52, Telish 21, Beshti 22, Corabia 25, Bukarest 105, Bellova 90, Tatar Bazardjik 86, Philippopolis 88, Adrianople 155, Constantinople 280.

He may also wish to consult the following list of the villages and hamlets in the vicinity of Plevna, with their distances in miles:—

North: Bukova (2); Opanetz (4); Bivolar (6), on the Vid; Ribina (8), half a mile east of the Vid.

North-east: Chalisovat (8), Breslianitza (10), both on the Nikopoli road; Verbitza (6).

East: Turski Türstenik (11); Grivitza (4), Karagatch (16), both on the Bulgareni road.

South-east: Radishevo (3), Sgalevitza (9), Pelishat (9), Porodim (9), Tultchenitza (6).

South: Bogot (7), Krishin (3), Brestovitz (5); the latter on the Lovdeha road, Krishin a mile west of it.

South-west: Medeven (8), a mile east of the Vid; Dolna Dubnik (9), Gorna Dubnik (15), both on the Dubnitza, a left tributary of the Vid, the former on the Orkanyé road, the latter half a mile north of it.

West: Blasivatz (4), Disevitza (6), Ternina (7), all on the Vid; Gorna Netropolié (10), on the Rahova road.⁶⁰

North-west: Dolna Netropolié (6), Türstenik (10).

Historically, Plevna was unknown up to 1877. The only interesting fact which I could ascertain from the better-informed inhabitants was that early in the century (1810 or 1828?), when Russians occupied the district, they quartered themselves in a Roman castle inside the town, then perfectly preserved, but which has since disappeared. There were in 1877 some Roman ruins near the Tultchenitza, two miles south of Plevna; close to them is a remarkable cave, supposed to be haunted, the subject of folk-lore and superstition. Since the town has formed part of Independent

Bulgaria it has diminished in size; the number of inhabitants in 1881 was stated to be 11,500. I estimate the number of residents who fell victims to the war at 5,000. Many Turks migrated to Ottoman territory.

At the commencement of hostilities Plevna was occupied by only one company of infantry and some gendarmes. On July 8 Cossacks appeared, and the garrison had to retreat to Rahova. They seized hostages and left on the following day, when Atouf Pasha (hitherto attached to the Nikopoli division) arrived, with three battalions and four guns. He took possession of the town without fighting; his force bivouacked on the hills. He drove away (July 10) a Russian advance-guard which appeared on the hills behind Grivitza, organised the irregular cavalry, arranged a reconnoitring and foraging service, collected stores, established ambulances for the invalids coming from Sistova and Nikopoli, and, being informed on July 15 of Osman's approach, prepared everything for his reception.

I append for reference a list of those superior officers whom I remember, or find mentioned in my notes, as having been attached to the Plevna army in July and August:—

Marshal : Osman Pasha.

General of Division : Adil Pasha.⁶¹

Generals of Brigade : Tahir Pasha (Chief of Staff); Ahmed Hifzi Pasha (disabled July 20); Kara Ali Pasha; Hassan Sabri Pasha (promoted during August); Atouf Pasha; Sadik Pasha (arrived from Rahova July 21); Rifa'at Pasha (arrived from Sofia July 23).

Colonels : Tewfik Bey; Hassib Bey (Surgeon-in-Chief); Yunuz Bey; Ahmed Bey (artillery); Osman Bey (cavalry); Hamdi Bey (joined in Kenicija July 17); Emin Bey (promoted early in August); Said Bey; Omer Bey.

Lieutenant-Colonels : Hairi Bey; Talahat Bey (Aide-de-Camp); Husni Bey (disabled July 20); Mehemed Bey; Mehemed Nazif Bey; Suleiman Bey; Ibrahim Bey; Raif Bey; Abdullah Bey.

The well-appointed Bulgarian house which served as night-quarters for my company had three to four rooms on each floor, with the bulk of furniture remaining in them, which the panic-stricken and possibly conscience-smitten inmates had been unable to move in their crazy flight. The front faced southward, towards the town, the back overlooked hilly and fertile country, with fine vineyards in the west and north-west. There was a fenced-in front garden, much like a London suburban one, and at the back a well-tended orchard, some 100 yards long, divided from the adjoining fields by a hedge.

At seven we turned in, and supper, consisting of mutton, rice, and turnips, boiled together, was cooked in the spacious kitchen of an outhouse. The batteries on the hills performed the table-music whilst we consumed, or rather devoured, our rations. Biscuits sufficient for a day were given to each man; coffee was made, and the men were instructed to fill one of their flasks; the others were replenished from a well in the orchard with excellent water. I had for my squad a treasure in the shape of two buckets of milk, obtained by my wily friend, Sergeant Bakal—I did not care to inquire how and where. We increased the quantity by adding water, and consumed the compound with the supper. I managed to save a portion for Jack. The men were told that they would have no breakfast on the morrow, and possibly no dinner; that they would have to depend on the cold coffee and biscuits they were carrying with them.

After supper cartridges were dealt out from the battalion's ammunition, stored in an adjoining shed. At nine, it being still daylight, muster was called, and the men were instructed to lie down, fully dressed. There was barely necessity for this order: after a seven days' forced march they fell where they stood. Four o'clock was the appointed time of rising; but the major said that we might expect an alarm at an earlier hour.

Towards dusk the cannonade had ceased.

The captain and the first-lieutenant had appropriated a

small front room on the ground-floor, Jack, Ibrahim and I a bed-closet on the first-floor. The first squad and the colour squad occupied the ground-floor, Jack's and my men the top floor. Men slept in the hall, the cellars, on the landings, and even on the stairs. A guard of twelve, under Tereb, watched in the kitchen, placing sentries, relievable every half-hour, at the bottom of the orchard; this guard was to be relieved at midnight, and Jack was to have command of the second watch. I presume that the reason for this precaution was the fact that the house stood in the extreme north of the town, whence an intended rear or flank attack of the enemy would have been witnessed first, had the out-posts been surprised.

I had a thorough wash. You that have your bath prepared every morning cannot realise the divine luxury of soap and water.

Mehemed, an extraordinarily hardy man, invited me to his room for a game of chess, having found the implements in a cupboard; my excuse of fatigue did not avail. The captain was away, at the major's quarters. We heard cavalry ride by, and saw a small body of Circassians, a battery, and a squadron of regulars pass through the street and leave the town in an easterly direction.

At 9.30 I was checkmated and left my companion, just as the captain arrived. He said to me: 'To-morrow you will be under fire for the first time; there is every prospect of a serious engagement. I trust you will do your duty.'

Mehemed Hardar told me afterwards that the captain had been writing for hours, probably to the dear ones at home. In my experience, limited to the European Turks, polygamy does not often affect a man's love for those belonging to him.

I had a look-in at the kitchen, and found Ibrahim dozing over the Koran, unable to keep his eyes open. The men were conversing in whispers of the coming fray; several were asleep. At the bottom of the orchard the sentries paced slowly their narrow zone. In the adjoining gardens

sentinels watched over our ammunition. It was a beautiful, starlit summer night.

It was past ten when I turned in. Jack was fast asleep, smiling in his dreams. My heart was full, and I wanted to talk to him, but did not like to rouse him. So I lay down beside him, fully dressed, sabre and revolver loaded in each chamber at my elbow.

What luxuries are a couch and a solid roof over your head! The last time I had slept in a room was three and a half months previously, in Bellova; I had not lain on a properly constituted bed since leaving the Mekteb Harbi, four months before.

From all sides came the sound of men breathing in their slumbers; otherwise the house, with its 180 inmates, was perfectly still. The town, too, seemed intensely, unnaturally quiet; neither came any sounds from the environs. It seemed impossible to realise that an area of a few square miles contained 15,000 men ready to slay or to be slain on the morrow. Occasionally the silence was broken by the tramp of a patrol, the neighing of a horse, the change of sentries; once I heard the distant bark of a watchdog, which reminded me, strangely and sadly, of home.

Though I was dead-beat, my eyes refused to close. Sleep seeming impossible, I rose and looked out of the window. The street was deserted. Westward I saw our carts drawn up in a line, with sentries pacing a narrow strip like automata; eastward I perceived numerous bivouac-fires, a mile or more away, undoubtedly those of strong outposts. Evidently nothing had been neglected to guard against surprises. Just then two officers rode up, and another came from the interior of the town. They met below my window, and I heard one report that all was quiet in the bivouacs. They rode away in the direction of the colonel's quarters.

I lay down again and tried, vainly, to sleep. Thoughts of the morrow cropped up in my mind like ugly phantoms. Can you wonder at it? I was eighteen years old, and fond

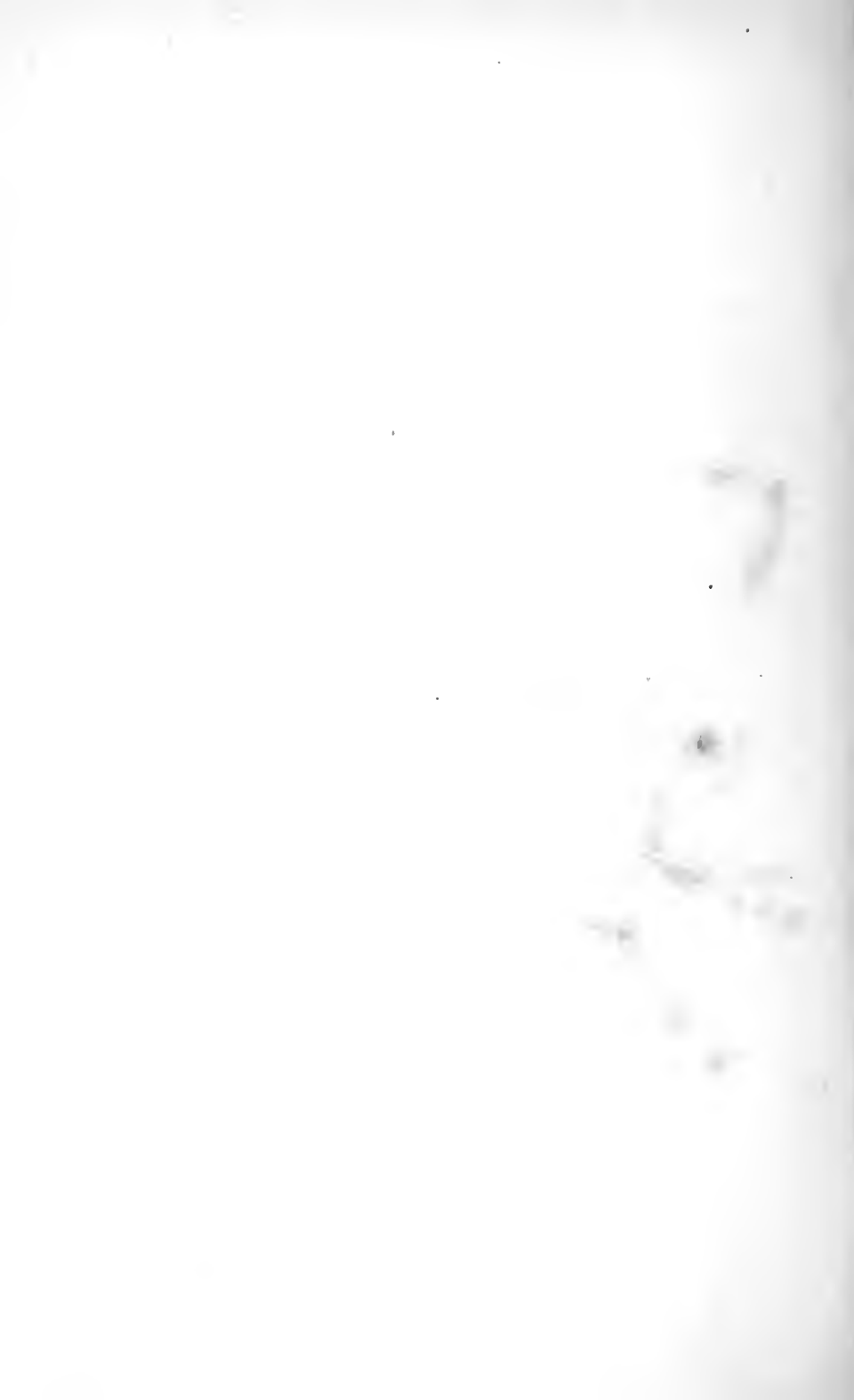
of life. I confess the idea that twenty-four hours later and through all eternity my bed might be the soil unnerved me. I had a distinct presentiment of death. If the Psychological Research Society desire evidence of a presentiment *not* being fulfilled, here they have it.

At midnight Ibrahim sent a man ; we roused Jack, who put his head into a basin of water and went downstairs, towelling himself with an antimacassar. Tereb came up, and fell asleep immediately, having barely sufficient strength to tell me that nothing had occurred during his watch. I heard the guard relieved ; there was a brief commotion in the house, in adjoining gardens, a few hoarse cries, a few subdued commands, and all was silent again. The dead stillness of night seized me also at last, and I fell into deep slumber.



PART II

THE STRUGGLE FOR PLEVNA







CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST BATTLE OF PLEVNA

JULY 20, 1877

I DREAMT that I heard the train which passes close to the house in my native town; the sound increased in volume to an unwonted extent, and the engine burst into the room—my bedchamber at home. A kick roused me. ‘Get up! The drums are beating the alarm,’ shouted Ibrahim. It was nearly daylight, the dawn of Friday, July 20, the day of my first action; my watch pointed—I think—to 2.40. I seized my arms, dipped my head into the basin, and rushed downstairs without drying myself. There was a gong in the hall, which the residents may have used for announcing the dinner-hour; I beat it vehemently. In less than a minute our company was drawn up outside; another company of our battalion was collecting in the same street. All was life and bustle: from every side came the sound of bugles, of words of command, of the tramp of detachments and the clatter of horses’ hoofs. Bash chawushes were running about, looking immensely important and getting into everybody’s way. I noticed ours, and could not forbear a smile: you would have thought he carried the burden of the Ottoman Empire on his shoulders. Our kol aghassi rode up and spoke to the captain. ‘Call the names!’ commanded the latter. Three men of Jack’s squad did not answer—the sentries at the extremity of the orchard, whom the guard had omitted to relieve. These were called, and the company was complete. Tereb and his squad were sent for the colours,

which were at the major's quarters ; they returned with that officer. Soon the other companies arrived, and when the battalion was complete we marched out, eastward.

Outside the town we halted, on the Bulgareni road, close to the bridge which crosses the Grivitza. Other troops arrived from the town : two battalions, a body of Circassians, a squadron of regulars. I noticed a colonel—not mine (Husni Bey), nor the one who had led the rear column (Saïd Bey) ; both were with the right wing. Two battalions were formed into three parallel columns, the four companies of my battalion forming the middle column, with four companies of the other on each flank ; my company was in the van, on a bridle-path leading in a north-easterly direction towards a ridge of hills of which the summit seemed to be about two miles distant. Ahead I perceived several small detachments of our irregular cavalry.

We were so busy that I had no time to think of the coming struggle and its possibilities. Jack looked bright and happy ; the fire of enthusiasm shone in his eyes. I managed to squeeze his hand ; he said, ' Good luck, old fellow ! '

It was ten or fifteen minutes past three when the order to advance was given. We marched on, with drums beating and colours flying ; but soon the drums were stopped. It was a glorious morning : bright sunshine, fresh breeze, dark blue sky. To our right and left moved the other columns through the fields ; we kept a little ahead, owing to our having the better track. On both flanks were small bodies of Circassians. It was gently rising ground. Looking round, I saw a battalion move away to our left in a northerly direction : it was soon lost to sight. In the west, the south-west, and the south I perceived, at a distance varying from one to three miles, strong stationary bodies of our infantry and artillery. We seemed to be fully prepared for the attack.

The hills here are bare, and being on high ground I had a good view of the country. There was no enemy within my range of sight.

We had left our baggage in the house. We had our

bread-bags, our flasks, our spades (four to the company). The captain had told me to leave a man behind, as a guard over the haversacks and great-coats against marauders. Naturally I had chosen one in whose courage I had no confidence, and who was footsore besides ; but the captain had substituted a reliable man, also footsore, saying that the other would undoubtedly desert if left alone, but if he remained with us we had a chance of getting rid of him. He was among the victims. Our packhorses, eighteen to the battalion, remained in Plevna.

Soon the men, who had been quiet, regained their spirits. The march was exhilarating. Last year's veterans boasted of their deeds and gave wholesome advice to the young recruits. Biscuits were eaten, flasks went to the lips, jokes were cracked and stories told.

Presently the path entered a hollow, and we lost sight of the columns on our flanks. We found a body of Circassians waiting, who preceded us at a distance of 200 yards, having, in their turn, a vanguard of six men.

Throughout that day everything within the range of my experience worked as smoothly as well-greased machinery ; but I was told afterwards there had been considerable disorder on our right wing, in the south, where the Russians were for a long time victorious ; of this, however, I have no personal knowledge. Every officer, down to the company leaders, seemed to have distinct and detailed orders ; we lieutenants were in the dark as to the plan of operations.

Turning round, I saw the other companies of our battalion following, two in a body, one as reserve farther away. The major was with the main body, the kol aghassi with us, to the captain's ill-concealed annoyance. Later in the day this man, a fussy, fidgety busybody, was wounded, at which occurrence the captain rejoiced greatly.

At four we reached a spot where the path crosses a ravine or hollow. The Circassians halted. I perceived that we had passed beyond the summit of the ridge, which was fifty feet above the level of path and ravine. The latter looked like the

bed of a stream, but it contained no water. Both banks were overgrown with shrubs; on our side there were some trees. Parts of Hampstead Heath remind me of this locality.⁶²

The captain told us that we had arrived at our destination. The Circassians dismounted and disposed themselves across the entrance of the path, sending their horses to the rear. Six men rode forward, beyond the ravine, on the continuation of the path. The spade-carriers erected some rough earth-works for the Circassians. Jack's squad and mine were to be stationed to the left, the first-lieutenant's to the right, of the path, all on the ridge. Climbing to our stations was not an easy matter.

The men were drawn out in a long line, and were told to lie down and avail themselves of every advantage offered by trees, shrubs, stones. Ten minutes later the advance-company of our left column arrived, and I, having the outside station, was instructed to keep in touch with it. I disposed my men accordingly.

On our side the ridge was steep; the opposite bank sloped more gently, and was ten to fifteen feet lower. We overlooked rising ground with patches of shrubbery; but the view was limited.

In this situation we waited for one anxious hour. The men ate and drank, but talking was prohibited. The colonel and the major came up, on foot, and inspected our position. When they returned to the main body they took the colour squad with them.

I must observe here that with the Turks it is not (or was not in 1877) customary to have any individual company specially trained and used as skirmishers. On this day *we* had this duty; on other field-days we were with the main body or formed the reserve.

How peaceful were our surroundings as we lay or sat there waiting for the enemy! The sun shone through the branches and drew a fantastic pattern of light and shade on the mossy, fragrant ground; daisies and buttercups

reminded me of home ; the nightingales sang plaintively and beautifully in the boughs overhead ; the wind whispered in the leaves in a dreamy and mysterious manner.

It must have been five when a man of the Circassian advance-guard came back at a trot. Immediately afterwards the report of a gun brought the nightingales' lament to a dead stop, startled the field-mice, which I had been watching lazily and drowsily, so that they scampered back to their holes, roused those men who had been dozing (I could not altogether prevent this), and acted generally like a magician's wand, transforming a perfect idyll into the barbaric glamour of war.

This was a Russian gun. In less than a minute our batteries responded, first to our right, then also to the left. In the beginning the firing was slow. During the intervals of silence I heard more distant detonations, to the north-west, the east, and the south. Soon the reports waxed fast and furious ; there was hardly any break in the roar, and so accustomed did my sense of hearing grow to this continuous thunder that I paid no heed to it, as if it were as much part and parcel of Nature as the smiling sky above me. The range of the Russian shells approached considerably near us ; we saw them whizzing overhead, but were not struck. Some of the younger men felt seedy, and asked for leave to absent themselves, which was of course refused. I heard afterwards that the main body of my battalion had been hit twice, and had to change position.

The abrupt termination of the reports quite startled us. Almost at the same moment the Circassian advance-guard came galloping back ; the subdued command, 'Ready for firing,' was given, and passed on from man to man, like a persistent echo, till it was lost to my hearing. My heart throbbed violently ; more so, perhaps, than if I had seen the enemy, for as yet I perceived nothing. I obtained a glimpse of Jack as he was giving some whispered order. Absolute silence had been enjoined. How handsome he looked in his boyish eagerness for the fray !

‘There they are!’ said one of my men, softly; and, to be sure, in a clearing 200 yards away I saw men in dark, sober uniforms glide stealthily from shelter to shelter. They were the Russian skirmishers.

I put my glasses to my eyes. The opposite ridge was suddenly swarming with men, some hundreds of them. I do not know whence they came—they seemed to grow out of the soil.

Then, all at once, dark, dense masses appeared on the summit of the ridge—closed bodies of infantry, two battalions, I should think, coming forward swiftly, noiselessly, like cruel, ruthless Fate herself, like an inevitable, irresistible doom. I had just noticed the mounted officers, the colours fluttering in the breeze, the burnished steel of the bayonets glittering in the morning sun, all the horrible paraphernalia of war, when the air was shaken with the roll of drums. I put the glasses away and clutched my sabre—useless weapon—firmly.

I cannot say what space of time had elapsed between the return of the Circassians and the commencement of the firing. It seemed to me an eternity; it can have been but a few minutes. The suspense and strain upon the nerves whilst waiting for our bugle to sound ‘Fire’ were terrible.

Suddenly a fellow with a villainous bearded face, crowned by an ugly cap, appeared on the opposite bank, barely 150 feet away. I cocked my revolver. Other men appeared; soon I could have counted a hundred of them from where I stood. As yet no shot had been fired. At last our bugle sounded; the long-drawn-out clatter of rifle-fire woke the slumbering echoes of the glen; I was in a thick white cloud. Something whizzed past me, like a big blue-bottle on the wing, and the current of air caused by its rapid passage touched my ear. Another—another. All at once I realised that these were the enemy’s bullets, and, *horribile dictu*, the discovery brought on a sudden violent attack of cholera-like indisposition.

I have described my sensations on my first appearance

under fire in detail because they never repeated themselves. My second action found me already as unconcerned and hardened as if I had been a veteran with decades of service.

It did not take me many seconds to recover, and soon I was cool and collected. Meanwhile the fire on both sides continued with great vehemence. One man close to me, kneeling, fell upon his face and never stirred; another had part of his ear carried away. When the smoke cleared I perceived three Russians lying at the bottom of the ravine, one bleeding horribly in the face, the others in ghastly convulsions. I saw dense masses of men in serried ranks appear on the opposite bank. From my right came cries of 'Hurrah,' and the less vigorous Turkish response, 'Allah!'

I went up and down my line, exhorting, praising, shouting—uttering precious, ungrammatical nonsense and acting like a maniac, I have no manner of doubt. A brief glimpse of Jack showed him doing much the same thing, with some little more method, perhaps, and with considerable force of conviction. Several times I detected myself spouting German and English.

The men of my squad loaded and discharged with astonishing celerity; they had been thoroughly drilled at quick firing, in which the Turkish infantry excels. With one or two exceptions, I noticed no 'skulking'—none at all in subsequent actions. Some were shouting and jabbering like idiots, firing all the time; many seemed possessed of a perfectly devilish fury; others were silent, and more unconcerned than when at target-practice. Sergeant Bakal, the best shot of the battalion, aimed with great deliberation, and I doubt not but that he brought his man down with every discharge. The corporal swore like a trooper at the 'Infidel dogs'; afterwards he told me, by way of apology, that this was the only way to animate the Turkish soldier.

In front of my squad the enemy did not advance beyond the edge of the opposite bank.

I presume that not many minutes had elapsed since the

commencement of the fray when the captain came up hurriedly, and shouted into my ear—the din was perfectly infernal, and the thunder of cannon had recommenced—that he would have to give the order for retreat upon the main body ; that I was not to trouble about regaining the path, but was to bring my squad back, independently of the others, through the shrubbery. He left me, and a minute afterwards the bugle sounded the retreat ; those of the other advance-companies responded.

I collected my fifty men, minus one killed ; two were *hors de combat*, and had to be carried ; there were four or five with slight wounds.

Just then I noticed half a dozen Russians in the hollow below, trying to climb our bank. I shouted to the sergeant and his party, and fired my revolver ; one Russian dropped ; the sergeant and his men discharged their rifles, and the rest were sprawling on the ground.

Jack's squad had already left when we broke up. The sergeant with twelve men covered our retreat, firing continually at haphazard ; for we were not pressed, owing, probably, to the difficulty which the enemy encountered in climbing the bank. The last thing I saw of the Russians was that they were coming down the opposite bank in dense numbers. In another minute we should have been annihilated.

I got my squad safely back to the main body of the battalion, which was ready in battle array, in an excellent position. We were sent to the rear, where the wounded received the first-aid from the battalion's surgeon, assisted by an old corporal and a volunteer private who had been a student of medicine. I noticed that the men had erected some rough protective earthworks.

À propos of surgeons, each battalion ought to have had a surgeon and a physician ; but, like many other things in the Turkish Army, this was a paper-institution. Thus the three battalions which formed our regiment had but one surgeon between them, and no physician. Not counting volunteer ambulances and civilians, there were only twenty medical

men with our corps at that time, whereas we should have had fifty or sixty.

Jack's squad had arrived before mine ; he had one killed and no dangerous wounds, but a good many scratches. The first-lieutenant's squad came up a few minutes later, and I learnt that his position, where the banks were less steep, had been assailed by superior numbers, and that he had had a hand-to-hand conflict. He had two killed and three severely wounded (left behind, but recovered later), besides minor accidents. I heard also that the lines of the other advance-companies had been broken through. The Circassians were the last to arrive, on foot, as the men in charge of the horses had retired in another direction. They had defended the bridle-path obstinately, and maintained a continuous fire during their retreat, with the enemy close upon them.

The fact that these men did not recover their horses until days afterwards will give the lay reader some idea of the bustle and confusion in a widely extended camp after a general engagement.

My experience of the Circassians tends to show that it is difficult to get them to 'come up to the scratch,' but when pressed they are demons. Like all troops of the Turkish Army, they are formidable when on the defensive, but less good on the offensive.

The fire had relaxed, but about 6.30, as nearly as I can judge, a furious and sustained musketry-fire roused us, and we arrayed ourselves again for combat. We were now on the southern slope of the Janik Bair ; the crest and the northern slope were occupied by the six fighting companies of our column. Three companies were in reserve ; the three advance-companies were for the present inactive in the rear. I saw the colonel and the two majors with their staffs on the top of the hill, with the reserve companies ready for the fray. Looking round, I perceived a battery trotting away from us, much to my surprise. On a hill to the east I noticed strong bodies of Russian and Turkish infantry in desperate conflict. From all sides came the sounds of battle,

violent enough to shake the ground ; the engagement seemed to be general along the whole line.

Great was my astonishment when the order arrived to retreat to Bukova, which was pointed out to me on the northern edge of a hollow, about a mile distant. True, the Russian shells had recommenced to fall, but as yet no damage had been done, and we were in a capital position. I know that the command did not proceed from the Mushir, who watched the battle from the hill immediately east of Plevna. I have, therefore, this hypothesis to offer :—

The brigadier, believing that we were outnumbered, considered it safer to retire early in good order than late as a beaten and demoralised mass. He chose Bukova on account of its proximity, and because it was held—as I learnt afterwards—by two battalions which had not yet been engaged. I have since ascertained that on and near this spot a Russian regiment (Wologda, three battalions) was opposed to five Turkish battalions (our two, and three on our right flank). Taking into account the difference of strength between Russian and Turkish battalions, we were nearly equal. Another regiment (Galitz) was known to be coming up by the Nikopoli road ; it arrived, however, too late.

Our reserve companies disappeared on the other side of the hill, probably to cover our retreat ; I saw also a squadron of regular cavalry trotting forward. My company was at the head of the retiring column ; in fact, I was the head man, with Sergeant Bakal, who always knew everything, to show me the way. We had charge of five one-horse carts filled with wounded ; but these quitted us soon, and, escorted by a few Circassians, turned to the left, towards Plevna. We walked at a smart pace. All the time the firing continued behind us ; evidently the tail of the column was being pressed hard by the advancing enemy. The shells fell to our right and left, but we were not struck. During the retreat the companies became mixed ; I witnessed, however, no actual disorder and no demoralisation.

Time calculations tell me that it was 7 or 7.30 when we

reached Bukova. My memory is at fault as regards the events during the next stage of the battle; probably some sort of mental reaction set in. All I remember is that I found myself posted, with my company, on the bank of a brook (a tributary of the Grivitza), on the outskirts of the village, close to a mosque; that I felt terribly hungry, and that biscuits, of which I had some left, did not seem to satisfy me; that we were proceeding to refill our flasks in the streamlet, when a small Russian detachment appeared suddenly on the other side. A violent fire ensued, which cost us several men. In the midst of it there came from the interior of the village sounds of a most desperate encounter: furious firing, drums, bugles, vigorous cries of 'Allah,' but no Russian responses. Our kol aghassi came up at a gallop and shouted to the captain. The enemy on the opposite bank disappeared as suddenly as he had come, leaving several dead behind. The words 'The Russians are flying!' went from mouth to mouth, and off we ran, not in very excellent order. When we gained the spot where the Chalisovat bridle-path enters the village we perceived dense masses of Russians retreating in disorder, partly on this path, northward, partly across the fields to the east. Through my glasses I saw men without caps, men without rifles, even without boots, and in shirt-sleeves; officers exhorting, imploring; horses prancing; men running, firing behind them, dropping—a struggling mass of demoralised humanity. The Russian books state that the troops retired in good order. I can testify to the fact that they were in a desperate hurry, to say the least of it. Closed ranks of our infantry, under perfect control, were at their heels; their fire dealt death and destruction. We joined these, and found ourselves next to a company of our own battalion, with whom we advanced through the fields eastward. Thus we pursued the enemy across fields and meadows, over hedges and ditches, up hill and down dale. The men's spirits had revived wonderfully, for the joy of victory is as contagious as the despondency of defeat. I remember that the captain shouted to us lieu-

tenants to get in front of the squads, to prevent the men from firing; their eagerness was alarming, and as we were in the second line our fire would have reached our comrades.

The Russians made a brief stand when they gained the Nikopoli road. Their officers, whose superhuman efforts were apparent to me, succeeded in restoring something like order in the ranks. They were hailed with a terrific quick-fire, and their resistance, though desperate, did not last long. Soon they continued the retreat, in slightly better order, leaving scores of dead behind.

Our captain now stopped his all too eager men. Other companies continued the pursuit, but not for long. Soon three companies of our battalion collected on this spot; the fourth did not rejoin us until hours later, in Plevna, having followed a hostile detachment on the Chalisovat path, where they encountered a regiment of Cossacks. As the major and the kol aghassi could not be found (the former was with the fourth company, the latter had been wounded), my captain took command of the battalion and led it to the bridle-path—free from enemies, but containing a good many dead, friends and foes—and back to the ravine, where we occupied the positions which we had held in the morning. I saw no Russians again that day, nor, indeed, until ten days later. The cannonade soon ceased and the rifle-fire grew fainter and fainter. The first battle of Plevna had been fought and won.

I should have liked to be able to record that I had a hand in the rout of the enemy; but truth compels me to state that I had no share in it beyond that mentioned above. What had actually happened was this:—

Our column, closely pursued, had entered Bukova, followed thither by the Russians. There had been a desperate street fight, and the enemy seemed to have had the best of it. Some of his companies, considering themselves masters of the place, had actually bivouacked in the streets, when they were surprised by fresh battalions. After a brief but furious encounter the Russians had been driven

out of the village, in the condition in which I had perceived them.

The general course of the battle was, briefly, as follows :—

The enemy, commanded by General Schilder-Schuldner, attacked from four points : from the north, north-east, east, and south-east.

In the north a regiment of Cossacks became engaged with the two battalions stationed near Opanetz, and were driven off after a brief encounter, so that one battalion was available to assist the troops in Bukova.

In the north-east two regiments and three batteries attacked the main body of our left wing (nine battalions). Four battalions, supported by the unengaged centre, held their positions ; five battalions (including mine) were thrown into Bukova. Here were two battalions (fresh) ; one came from Opanetz, and one was sent from the reserve ; these made a counter-attack and routed the enemy.

In the east one regiment and two batteries pressed our right wing back (westward), along and south of the Bulgareni road, as far as the headquarters hill. The Turks became demoralised, from various causes : they were over-tired, not having properly rested after their march ; the commander of this wing (Ahmed Hifzi Pasha) and his successor (Lieut.-Colonel Husni Bey) were wounded ; a bugler had sounded the retreat through a mistake. The Russians were numerically superior at this point (a regiment—Kostroma, 3,000 men—against four battalions—2,000 men). The Mushir reorganised the beaten infantry, and, utilising his two reserve battalions, made a counter-attack, which succeeded.⁶³

In the south a Cossack brigade approached as far as Radishevo and made a demonstration, then turned eastward, and finally covered the retiring forces.

At midday the four Russian columns were in full retreat. They bivouacked that night near Breslianitza.

The enemy lost over 3,000 killed and wounded, nearly a third of the troops under fire, and a fourth of the force engaged. This terrible loss fell almost entirely upon three

infantry regiments, the artillery and Cossacks having suffered but little. I, personally, saw no hostile cavalry on that day. We had 2,000 killed and *hors de combat*. Our trophies were seventeen three-horse ammunition carts, one demolished gun, a great many rifles, and the baggage—including 300 tents—of an entire regiment, found on the spot on which it had bivouacked before commencing the attack.

It must have been 1 P.M. when we arrived at our old positions near the ravine. There were thirty corpses in the latter, some in grotesque attitudes. We stayed on the scene for two hours, with outposts on the opposite bank, but no enemy was seen. The want of water made itself felt, more so than the craving for food; it was very hot, and the roads had been dusty. Our flasks were empty, and there was no water in our proximity. The captain had gone to arrange the positions of the other companies. Jack came up to me, and addressed me in English:

‘I say, old chap, my men are famishing; the boss’—he meant the captain—‘isn’t there, and Mehemed is a quarter of a mile away, so we are in supreme command; suppose we organise a water-search?’

We consulted Sergeant Bakal—I did so pretty frequently—who agreed to our proposal. In addition to his other accomplishments, he had the reputation, gained during the Servian campaign, of being the most successful water-finder of the corps. So he went with three men to explore the shrubbery.

I must mention that Hardar had been placed in charge of forty men without officers belonging to another battalion, who had gone astray and lost their own company.

The sergeant returned after a brief absence, reporting the discovery of a fine spring. A water-party was organised, consisting of twelve men (without rifles), carrying the flasks of the two squads, with an escort, armed, of five men under a corporal, the whole officered by the sergeant. The find was reported to the first-lieutenant, who held the path and the ridge beyond.

How we enjoyed the precious liquid! The costliest vintage could not have tasted sweeter.

Later in the day I got a mild reproof from the captain; for it appeared that the sergeant had searched for, and discovered, the water on the other side of the ravine, and it was, of course, not correct to have sent the men beyond the line allotted to us. The wily chawush had kept me in ignorance of the exact locality. I had had my suspicions, but considered it better to ask no questions.

When the refreshing effect of the water had worn off, the total exhaustion of the men became apparent. Small wonder, considering that they had fought after a seven days' forced march with barely six hours of rest intervening, and had eaten nothing but a few biscuits in eighteen hours. Many were foot-sore and could hardly limp. The fatigue, heat, and hunger were enough to kill a man. We lieutenants and the non-commissioned officers did our best to restore their equanimity. The last march—that to the present spot—was ridiculed: we had met no Russians, except dead ones, and they could do no harm; why could we not have gone back to Plevna and had a distribution and a good meal?—for it had become known that a convoy had arrived late last night.

To our joy we were relieved at three by a battalion coming up from the hills to our right. We were instructed to return to Plevna and distribute the train which we had escorted among the different battalions. However, this order was countermanded afterwards, on account of the men's extreme fatigue, and was not executed until the following day.

Whilst we were forming for the march back I observed the bringing up of the dead for burial, this battalion having been instructed to commence immediately the ghastly task of interment. The faces of some bore an expression of peace and contentment; but in many cases the features were distorted. Several bodies were mutilated horribly, by shells. I was struck by the extraordinary postures of some of the corpses. One had his fists doubled in front of him, like a

boxer ready to spar; another was sucking his fingers; another was spread out in the shape of a cross. But enough of these horrors, which repeated themselves after every engagement.

I was astonished to discover how hardened a few hours of slaughter had rendered me. Jack had the same sensation. But the horror of the situation came home to me later when muster was held, and I had to cross out several names, those of men who had responded, vigorous and strong, in the morning. After the next action this feeling also had vanished.

As near as I can remember, our company, out of a total of 180, had lost seven killed and ten *hors de combat*; there were, besides, ten or fifteen with minor wounds, contusions, and scratches.

During our march to town we met many cartloads of dead; the poor fellows were piled one upon the other like so much human rubbish. Friend and foe slept in peaceful embrace.

Our troops buried 1,000 Russians and 900 Turks. We had 300 wounded prisoners.

At four we arrived in Plevna, dead-beat, famishing, limping, dust-stained and smoke-begrimed, many in tatters, many bleeding—a sorry spectacle. We went to our old quarters. Several men had dropped on the road; these came in later on the carts bringing up the wounded.

A distribution took place immediately, and Sergeant Bakal obtained for my squad two fine joints of beef, a sufficiency of rice, turnips, biscuits, coffee, some pears and early apples, a little tobacco, and the necessary salt, sugar, soap and candles.

I never enjoyed a meal more than my dinner on that day.

The town was all in a bustle. The ambulances were full. Carts of wounded came in from all sides; their groans were terrible to hear.

So far as I know we had taken no unwounded prisoners,

which speaks well for the bravery of the enemy. I do not think the Turkish commanders had 'missing' men to record; in any case, there were none in my battalion.

Both Jack and I thought it a pity that the Russians were not followed farther, particularly by cavalry; for it turned out that on all points the pursuit extended only to the lines originally occupied. However, I cannot presume to criticise, and such a commander as Osman must be held to have known his business.

Moreover, we were short of cavalry, having at that time only six squadrons of regulars (of eighty men each), 400 Circassians, and a troop of fifty men composed of the armed and mounted Turkish peasantry of the province. These latter were obedient and well-behaved, but lacked zeal, dash, and skill; whilst the Circassians, though undoubtedly brave and extremely cunning, were given to excesses: were selfish, vicious, riotous, ill-disciplined, and altogether unreliable soldiers, as I found out later, to my cost. The one occasion on which I was in disgrace with my superiors was due to them; the incident will be narrated in its proper place.

I have nothing but admiration for the conduct of the regular troops of the Ottoman Army. Their behaviour, from the first battle to the last awful, never-to-be-forgotten sortie, was beyond praise.

We had no further duties that day. After a few hours' complete rest we lighted a bonfire in the orchard, and the men sang, talked, and disported themselves at their sweet will and pleasure, being in the highest of spirits, although many slept through the performance. A scratch band marched through the streets, discoursing barbarous music, with much beating of drums, clashing of cymbals, and jingling of bells. These latter are carried, to the number of fifteen or twenty, on a gaily decorated pole with a half-moon on the top. No thoughts were, apparently, given to the comrades who rested by this time under the soil, or to those who, in the ambulances, writhed in cruel agonies. I played chess with Mehemed, sparred with Jack, fenced with Ibrahim,

made an entry in my diary, and wrote a note home, without any immediate prospect of despatching it ; for our field-post arrangements were of a primitive description, and broke down completely more than once.

Before retiring Jack and I went up to the flat roof, whence we saw the bivouac-fires extending in a semicircle, north, *viâ* east, to south, with a diameter of five to six miles, making a lurid smear in the sky.

The night passed quietly, and I enjoyed perfect rest.

These observations suggest themselves to me :—Russian, German, and French works state that during this battle the Russians penetrated into Plevna, and held the town for some time. This is false. It was an error first made by the newspaper-correspondents in the Russian camp—who frequently wrote from Russian officers' dictation—and copied since from book to book. The mistake is easily explained : it is simply a confusion between Bukova and Plevna. Seen from the northern hills (where General Schilder-Schuldner had his headquarters) the two places appear like one in the line of sight, the intervening valley, two miles wide, not being visible. A glance at the map will show that it was impossible for the enemy to take Plevna without totally routing us : such a feat would have cut our line of retreat, separated us from our supplies, train, and reserve, and delivered the Mushir himself into Russian hands. Many errors have also been made as regards the strength of the opposing forces in the battle. One writer states that 6,000 Russians fought 40,000 Turks ! It is astonishing what liars patriotism will make of men ! These are the correct figures : Osman had nineteen battalions, plus three found in Plevna and three received from Rahova and Nikopoli—total, twenty-five battalions, with barely 1,000 mounted men and nine and a half batteries ; altogether 15,000 men, with fifty-eight guns. The Russians had four regiments of infantry (including the Regiment Galitz, although it did not fight ; but does not the rook in chess count ?), with three regiments of cavalry and six batteries ; total, 13,000 men with forty-six guns.

The slight numerical superiority on the Turkish side was more than counterbalanced by the extreme fatigue of the troops. A third error has been made in describing Plevna as a stronghold. On July 20 Plevna was a perfectly open town, and the Turkish soldiers had no entrenchments, except a few primitive earthworks hastily erected between mid-day of the 19th and 4 A.M. on the 20th. Even by the second action, ten days later, only one-half of the redoubts had been constructed. In the second or third week of August the eastern fortifications approached completion ; but those west of the town were not erected until October and November. It is to be hoped, in the interest of historical truth, that these errors will not creep into future works.

CHAPTER VII

PREPARING FOR THE DECISIVE STRUGGLE

JULY 21 TO 29, 1877

NEXT morning (July 21) my squad escorted the packhorses and carts of three battalions (fifty-four horses and six carts) to one of the camps on the eastern hills. Here the men were busy erecting provisional earthworks, and in the absence of a sufficient number of tools many were digging with their bayonets and side-arms. The Turkish soldier evinces great skill in the hasty construction of protective works.

Yesterday's events formed the one topic of conversation in camp. It appeared that all our battalions had been in turn engaged, even the three which had formed the tail of our column and had arrived during the night. The panic on our right wing was much discussed. The general commanding here (Ahmed Hifzi Pasha) had been wounded, and the buglers had sounded the retreat, an order which could be traced to no source, and gave rise to absurd rumours. I was told the Mushir had sent a message that, if the troops did not make an immediate stand, he would have them shelled by their own guns—those of two batteries established on the top of the hill, close to his headquarters. This had the desired effect.

Later I learnt that the Mushir had caused two officers from this wing—a kol aghassi and a lieutenant—to be brought before him, on a charge of cowardice. Instead of having them shot—the ordinary course—he inflicted a personal chastisement—boxed their ears, in fact. I believe

that these men behaved very well afterwards. This was said to be the only occasion on which Osman had been known to lose his temper. I can imagine the rage of such a man to be terrible.

In the bivouacs the men were building rough huts and making things comfortable. The Turkish Tommy Atkins has a wonderful talent for adapting himself to circumstances. He will subsist upon next to nothing, and will be at home anywhere. In my opinion, Turkey furnishes better raw material for soldiers than any European nation. With ample means, an organised commonwealth, and less corruption in high places, the Ottoman Army would be well-nigh invincible.

I was instructed to take back to Plevna, and deliver intact to a colonel, the baggage of a Russian regiment found early in the morning. During the journey I had some difficulty to prevent plunder on the part of my men. In my task I received assistance from Sergeant Bakal, who was, indeed, invaluable to me throughout the campaign.

At midday Jack and I were ordered to present ourselves, at the Konak of the Kaim-mekam of Plevna, to the officer whom I have previously called Ali Bey. This gentleman asked us whether we were capable of assisting in the preparation of the plans for fortifying the camp, *i.e.* reproducing drawings and sketches, and so forth. We replied in the affirmative, and received from him a note to our major, requesting the latter to grant us three days' dispensation from duties.

After dinner—for which we had again meat and a quantity of fruit from the numerous orchards in the vicinity—we reported ourselves to Ali Bey, and commenced our task, which was easy enough, and consisted principally in making 'clean' copies of plans. Our office was a lofty room in the Konak, in the centre of the town. Two young mulazims, three boluk-eminis,⁶⁴ and an ancient kol aghassi were our colleagues. The mulazims belonged to the one company of engineers of which our corps could boast. The

kol aghassi acted as superintendent; he was gruff whilst at work, but thawed at meal-times, and ate alarmingly. Some difficulty was caused by the scarcity of stationery and drawing implements: we had but one pair of compasses and half a ruler among us, and no indiarubber. This being made known to Ali Bey, he instituted a house-to-house search—the shops were closed—and his emissaries brought back rulers and pencils galore, reams of paper, quarts of ink, but no compasses. One man, through misunderstanding or ignorance, or possibly by way of a joke, came with a woman's workbasket; so the scissors did duty as compasses. In war a man's inventive faculties have the widest scope. I have seen a *parlementaire's* flag made out of a woman's nightgown. I have known messengers to swallow secret despatches in a compound of gun arabic and sugar, to obtain them again on arrival at destination by means of a purgative. I myself have worn a capital under-vest made of the skins of a demolished drum; I have used soft clay as soap, and the blood of a slaughtered horse, mixed with a little permanganate of potash, as ink. These instances could be continued *ad infinitum*.

There being a scarcity of material for artificial light, we left off work before dusk, and had a good supper in an arbour in the garden.

Jack and I returned to our quarters, but found the company gone. Our luggage was left behind, with a note from the captain, which we had some trouble to decipher—in fact, we had to call in aid—instructing us to join him in the bivouac on the Janik Bair after having finished with Ali Bey. So we had the house to ourselves. We carried two bedsteads into one of the ground-floor rooms, and made up comfortable and even luxurious quarters. Then we strolled through the town.

The terrifying effect of the battle having worn off, many of the Turkish inhabitants were taking an airing outside their houses, the women veiled, leaving only the eyes visible: but these were expressive enough to atone for the absence of

the face. Numbers of the Christians had fled ; those remaining behind did not leave their abodes. No Bulgarian inhabitant was allowed to pass beyond the Turkish lines, lest he should turn traitor. *À propos* of these, the statement made in Russian books, and copied by German and French authors, that Osman compelled them to assist in the construction of trenches is a fabrication. The fortifications were erected entirely by our soldiers, aided by a few *volunteer* (*i.e.* Turkish) civilians.

Trade in Plevna was at a standstill. Nobody was busy except the ambulance parties, and these were overworked. Not many soldiers appeared in the streets ; I believe in those days the town itself was held by a single battalion. No damage had been done by shells.

Some symptoms of relief from fear, anxiety, and suspense made themselves felt after Osman's first victory. The Turkish authorities had been formally reinstalled after the Cossacks had been driven away by Atouf Pasha on July 9, ten days before the arrival of our corps, but it was only when the first battle of Plevna had been fought and won that they really resumed their functions. Social life, however, was in a state of coma, and in business stagnation reigned supreme. The Christians must have spent a terrible time, with their suppressed sympathy for the invaders. I believe the two churches of Plevna saw no worshippers for many months. Later the buildings were, I think, utilised by the soldiers, but I cannot speak with certainty, as I entered the town but rarely, my duties being in the redoubts.

During our walk we met one of the 'fellows from our office,' as Jack called him ; he returned home with us. Here he offered us a flask of capital brandy. I do not know where the rogue had obtained it. By the light of a candle-stump we spent a jovial evening. The mulazim did not partake of the spirits, his religion forbidding it, so Jack made some coffee for him, which we had saved from the morning's ration. I contributed the remainder of my Widdin cigarettes. When midnight arrived the Turk did not venture to return to his

quarters, as the streets were patrolled, and he had exceeded his leave of absence. He slept in an upper room. I do not know what excuse he made in the morning.

I can pass over the next two days (July 22 and 23) with a few words. We were busy in the 'office,' and finished our task on the afternoon of the 23rd. Having been dismissed by Ali Bey with a few gracious words, we shouldered our baggage and walked to the Grivitza bridge, thence up the hills, where we lost our bearings. It was not until some hours afterwards that we found the bivouac of our battalion. We presented ourselves to the major, who employed us immediately in surveying the ground. This work was quite new to us, but necessity is an ideal teacher.

This done, we reported ourselves to the captain and resumed command of our squads. The poor man had been much worried with the trenches allotted to his company; but then, the technical education of the Turkish officer is none of the highest. We assisted him to the best of our abilities.

The erection of redoubts and entrenchments was already in full swing. There were now plenty of tools in stock, a large supply having come from Orkanyé. The troops worked in relays, by night and day, in the hours of darkness by the light of fires. I had four hours' duty that evening, and slept in the big hostelry of the starlit sky. The next day my men constructed some rough mud huts; we were thus protected against the showers that fell at rare intervals. Later, the interior of the hollowed-out redoubts served as sleeping-quarters.

The 24th passed without incident. I shall only observe that we had a strong, continuous chain of outposts, doubled at night. This chain must have been sixteen miles long. Numerous small parties of horsemen, both regulars and irregulars, reconnoitred the neighbourhood; I learnt that even the squadron serving as guard to headquarters was utilised in this manner. Osman has been blamed for not employing his cavalry properly or sufficiently; my experience is the reverse: he could not have done better, or more, with

the small force at his command—under 1,000, of which half were auxiliaries. Some of our cavalry parties came within range of the Russian guns, and were fired at.

I think it was on this day that we received a strong reinforcement (fourteen battalions) from Sofia, and that we heard that Mehemed Ali Pasha had replaced Abdul Kerim Pasha as Serdar Ekrem.⁶⁵

On the 25th I had a nasty accident. An order had arrived from headquarters enjoining the utmost speed in the construction of the works. Seeing other mulazims take part in the digging, I seized a spade and worked till the perspiration streamed across my face. My foot slipped, I fell, and my left hand slid down the stem, the upper edge of the blade cutting the thumb at the base, where it is joined to the forefinger.

The wound bled and smarted considerably. The battalion surgeon happened to be near. After having bound up the hand, he advised me to go to the ambulance, as there was a danger of something or other setting in—I did not understand the word he employed. Having heard of lockjaw, and knowing that ills are expressed in Turkish by ‘*agrisi*’ (for instance, *bash agrisi*, headache; *itch agrisi*, dysentery), I asked: ‘*Chéné agrisi*,’ *i.e.* jaw-ache? He replied, ‘*Evet, lakin pek chok daha fena*’ (yes, but very much worse), and spoke to the captain. The latter ordered me to depart immediately, saying that he would not like me to be absent from the engagement which was sure to take place within the next few days. I did not much relish the idea of the two-mile tramp to town in the scorching sun; but Bakal informed me that carts were going to Plevna with empties, and bespoke a seat on one for me. There were a dozen, drawn by oxen, with civilians as drivers, under a corporal, with two men and a few irregulars; these had charge also of a Russian spy, who had been captured in the morning. This fellow was dressed as a Turk, and had a brown complexion; but, to my thinking, his beard betrayed him as a non-Turk. He was tied to the tail of the cart on which I had a front seat,

by means of a halter round his neck ; his hands were bound behind him. He did not look dejected, but tried to get up a conversation—in excellent Turkish—with the soldiers, who disdained to reply. The corporal, who sat beside me, told me that he had been discovered digging assiduously in the trenches. The Turkish (civilian) workmen from Plevna who voluntarily helped the soldiers did not know him as a fellow-townsmen ; on being interrogated, he had given unsatisfactory replies, and had tried to swallow a piece of paper, which, being forced out of his jaws, was found to be inscribed with Cyrillian characters.

Presently, as we were jogging leisurely along the glaring, dusty, shelterless road, the driver, a rough labourer, smoking the best tobacco I have ever smelt, and causing the corporal and me to contemplate murder (we were without tobacco), the prisoner addressed me in French, having undoubtedly heard in camp that I was a Frank :

‘Auriez-vous la bonté, Monsieur, de m’écouter ? J’ai quelque chose à vous dire. Ces gens-ci ne nous comprendront pas——’

I was not going to compromise my reputation, so I replied in a loud voice :

‘Fransiz söilyémem.’ *i.e.* ‘I do not speak French.’

But he continued glibly :

‘Cela ne vous sert pour rien, Monsieur ; tous les gentils-hommes anglais savent le français. En outre, je vous connais fort bien, et c’est moi qui vous parle qui vous ai ouï en ville discuter en français. Ecoutez donc—dans le cas où vous m’aidez à échapper au camp russe je ferai placer à votre crédit auprès d’une maison de banque quelconque d’Odessa ou de Saint-Pétersbourg une somme de cinq cent roubles—ma parole d’honneur. J’ai des amis là-bas qui jouissent d’une haute influence. Ne dites rien, Monsieur, écoutez-moi jusqu’au bout. Tout ce que vous aurez à faire c’est que vous vous rendrez ce soir dans une maison que je vous indiquerai, apportant les habits d’un soldat turc. Je vous en prie, Monsieur, ne me dites pas non. Vous avez le

bon cœur, c'est pourquoi je vous en parle ; et ces Turcs sont comme des diables. Vous me conserverez à ma femme et mes cinq enfants, et que le bon Dieu vous en bénisse !'

I did not reply, but whispered to the corporal not to allow the prisoner to communicate with anyone, as I had heard enough to feel convinced that he had powerful friends. This may appear cruel ; but the man had turned traitor to his country and his sovereign—it had been ascertained that he hailed from Nikopoli—and had done his best to deliver the army which defended his home into the enemy's hands for a sordid consideration. He deserved no pity. I presume I ought to have ascertained the whereabouts of the house mentioned by the spy ; but the idea of bringing misery to a family of co-religionists prevented me.

Disheartened by my stubborn silence, he exclaimed :

' Ah, mon Dieu, c'est donc tout fini, absolument fini ?'

Then he recovered his equanimity, and asked briefly for 'tütün' (tobacco). A lighted pipe was placed between his lips.

He was executed next morning.

I went with a note from the surgeon to a volunteer ambulance hailing, I think, from Philippopolis. It was established in the ground-floor and outhouses of a public building—a school, I believe—the upper floor of which served as offices to various civil and military bodies. The staff consisted of a physician, two surgeons, an apothecary, a clerk, a cook, and a dozen attendants, bearers, drivers, and servants. At that time it had charge of thirty invalids, mostly wounded, some few suffering from dysentery. Two of the patients were Russians. There was accommodation for another thirty inmates in the spacious rooms. On the evening of the battle there had been fifty, but all that could be moved had been despatched in carts to Orkanyé, to be forwarded thence to Sofia and farther. The remaining cases were grave ones. The ambulance was in thorough working order, and the service smooth and efficient.

I was given chicken broth, eggs, milk. Altogether, I

received exceedingly handsome treatment ; for we were then in the realm of plenty : every day brought convoys from Orkanyé.

À propos of this town, serving as half-way house between Sofia and Plevna, and being Osman's pantry, I must give a word of praise to its commander, Chefket Pasha, whose skilful dispositions and readiness of resource must have rendered his aid invaluable to the Mushir. Had Mehemed Ali Pasha, with his powerful army on the Lom, instead of frittering away his forces in useless petty manœuvres ; had Suleiman Pasha, instead of making it a foolish point of honour to reconquer the Shipka Pass—had these two commanders pushed boldly forward, the first towards Biéla, the second by another pass, say that of Troyan, thus working in concert with Osman and Chefket, in the end the Czar might have reached Constantinople, not as a victor, but as a prisoner. The position of the invaders in August was extremely precarious. Suleiman's heroic onslaughts on the Shipka Pass deserve every honour—their record reads like a passage from Homer ; but he acted much like the captive who tries to escape from his cell by digging through the walls when the door stands open. For Mehemed Ali and his predecessor, Abdul Kerim, there is no excuse. With their force, three times the strength of Osman's, they should have brought about a decisive battle. Even if they had been beaten, affairs would have been *in statu quo ante* ; if victorious, the invaders' line of retreat (the roads to Sistova-Simnitza) would have been lost.

Not feeling in the least unwell, I volunteered to assist the clerk. He gave me something to copy. After that I wrote letters for the Russians, in French, with which language one of them was conversant. This man had both arms amputated at the elbow, but I believe at the time did not know it, as he complained of pain in the hands. The case, as related to me by the clerk, is a good sample of battle-field complications : the man had received a shot in the left wrist ; whilst on the ground, insensible, with his right arm outstretched, the eight guns of a Russian battery retreating hastily, drove

over him, completely mangling the sound arm, besides inflicting other injuries. The second Russian had the flesh of his buttocks carried away by a shell-splinter, and had to lie in bed on his face. The letter which I wrote for this poor fellow to his young wife, in his comrade's French, ran somewhat as follows :

‘Ma bien-aimée, j’ai été dans une grande bataille ; j’ai reçu une vilaine blessure, et je suis prisonnier chez les Turcs. Mais ne t’en soucie pas trop ; ils ne sont pas méchants ; ils m’ont donné tout ce que je désire ; M. le docteur est très-bon et je l’aime beaucoup. Cette lettre est écrite par un officier turc, qui m’a promis de faire tout le possible afin qu’elle te parvienne ; et j’ai toute la foi du monde qu’il tiendra sa parole, parce qu’il a la figure si belle et si jeune. Je t’embrasse de tout mon cœur, ma bien-aimée, et je prie le bon Dieu que cette vilaine guerre finira bientôt, pour que je puisse me reposer et m’endormir dans tes bras, et mourir ainsi à ton sein, à la lumière de tes beaux yeux, et à la musique de ta voix si douce, dont les prières seront toute-fois écoutées au paradis par le bon Dieu et par les Saints et les anges. J’embrasse ce papier afin que tes lèvres puissent ainsi toucher les miennes, et je suis à toi, à jamais.’

A fortnight later I had an opportunity of despatching this letter, of which more anon. A few days after that I happened to be in Plevna, and called at the ambulance, in order to inform the Russian that I had fulfilled my pledge. He had died the night before. ‘The operation was a complete success,’ said the doctor, ‘but he succumbed to exhaustion.’ I wrote a note to the colonel of his regiment, giving his name and his wife’s address, and handed it to the next *parlementaire*. I believe his comrade recovered.

As I was an inmate of ambulances on five occasions, there is some confusion in my memory as regards the duration of each sojourn. Lockjaw did not set in, and I think it was no later than the following morning that I was told the danger had passed and I could go.

The battalion surgeon, seeing me return hale and hearty,

angry that his wisdom had been given the lie, said gruffly : 'According to the canons of the science you ought to have had lockjaw. They cannot have treated you correctly.' Jack executed a jig, in the fulness of his heart, much to the surprise of the soldiers, who had never before seen or heard of a dancing gentleman.

I had brought with me from Plevna 500 cigarettes and a pound of tobacco, obtained in a manner that I am ashamed of, and shall not dwell upon. We had quite a jollification. Mehemed gave me a rook, and checkmated me in twelve moves. The captain partook of my cigarettes, winked his ugly little eyes, and said nothing. The fire flared up brightly—there is nothing more annoying in bivouac life than to be unable to get the fire to burn—the stars smiled at us, the wind fanned us ; in front stretched the peaceful solitude under the veil of night, and before us lay Time, with death, and horrors immeasurably worse than death, hidden in her womb. The angels must have wept at our thoughtlessness.

I must mention two successful actions, fought on July 25 and 26, in which I had no share.

On the 25th, four of our battalions and two guns, under Brigadier Hassan Sabri Pasha, with Lieut.-Colonel Mehemed Nazif Bey as second, attacked Türstenik, north-west of Plevna. Here the Cossacks had established their base of operations, whence they harassed our convoys. After a brief resistance the enemy was dispersed. The force returned to Plevna on the following day.

Late on the 25th the Mushir despatched six battalions, a battery, and a body of Circassians, under Brigadier Rifa'at Pasha, with Colonel Tewfik Bey as second, on the road to Lovdcha. This town, called Lovatz by the Bulgarians, on the Osma, had been occupied by Cossacks on July 16. A glance at the map will show its importance. It lies eighteen miles north of Troyan and thirty-one miles north of the Troyan Pass entrance, on the spot where the Plevna-Troyan road is crossed by that coming from Tirnova, *viâ* Selvi, in the east. It had a mixed population of 14,000 souls, and

was considered one of the richest, prettiest, best-built, and most advanced towns of Bulgaria.

I have already mentioned that we had received fourteen fresh battalions from Sofia. This brought our total up to thirty-nine. Deducting the six despatched to Lovdcha, which stayed there, we had a strength of thirty-three in the battle of July 30.

In the early dawn of the 26th the Turks attacked Lovdcha. The Cossacks retreated almost immediately; the Bulgarian inhabitants, whom the Russians had armed and organised, fought furiously, but vainly. Summary justice was dispensed among them. I heard that some hundreds were strung up. Crowds were massacred by the infuriated Moslem mob, in revenge for a previous wholesale slaughter of the Turks by Christians.

It was undoubtedly Osman's intention to establish a base for future offensive operations on the Lovdcha-Plevna line. Probably he counted on Lovdcha being garrisoned by another corps, or at least a division. Such a one could have been sent from Sofia, Philippopolis, or Adrianople, *viâ* the Etropol or Troyan passes, these routes being in Turkish hands. Nothing of the sort was done. The burden of the war was laid upon Osman's shoulders. In solitary grandeur he accomplished the impossible: with his single corps he held for four and a half months the largest empire of the world in check.

The three days, 27th to 29th, passed in a fever-heat of preparation for the decisive struggle. We had plenty to eat—meat daily, and more fruit than was good for us; there were several cases of dysentery, two in our company; one or two terminated fatally. I was in good health; the wound had nearly healed on the day of the battle. Jack was in splendid condition; with his good humour and high spirits he was the life and soul of the camp. Fun and amusements, such as we had after the battle and are mentioned in their proper place, were absent; there was no leisure for diversion.

Our cavalry, increased by two squadrons of Ottoman

Cossacks hailing, I think, from the Caucasus—dirty, disreputable fellows, but as brave as lions and as cunning as serpents—patrolled the neighbourhood continually. Often they came in with important news, having seen the enemy. From all accounts it appeared that strong forces were concentrating and approaching from the north (Nikopoli), the north-east (Sistova), the south-east (Tirnova). It was clear to the meanest understanding that this time we had not to deal with a single division, but with one or two entire corps.

One half-squad of our company (twenty to twenty-five men) was constantly away on outpost duty. As both Jack and I were evincing some skill in the construction and completion of the redoubt, the captain kept our squads and us in camp, the duty of providing the outpost devolving on the first squad. This squad, with the addition of a few Circassians, was, for outpost purposes, divided into two parts, and was commanded by Hardar and Tereb alternately. Each outpost established a chain of a dozen single sentries, arranged in a semicircle: sometimes each sentry dug for himself a hole three feet deep; but in most cases this practice was not adopted until a later date: in November we had a continuous chain of these, thirty miles long, around our position. I estimate the distance between redoubt and outpost at a third, between outpost and sentry at a fourth, of a mile. I believe that each company in the front line had to furnish permanently one outpost. Ours was visited frequently by the captain, whilst the major, the colonel, and even the brigadier, or someone on his behalf, made unannounced tours of inspection at all hours of the day and night. Nobody was allowed to enter the camp without establishing his identity; no person—except reconnoitring or foraging parties—was suffered to leave unless he or she produced an authority from the Mushir.

I once stopped a party of Bulgarians from Plevna who were trying to sneak out with all their goods and chattels, including a cat, a canary, and a squalling baby, and sent them back to town under escort. I made my report **as mild**

as possible, and I believe they were not interfered with, being merely told not to do it again.

The discipline was of the severest; the general dispositions were admirable. Everything worked without a hitch.

Our kol aghassi was laid up with a bad wound, to everybody's satisfaction. He recovered a month later, and there was a day of lament.

Mehemed related to me one day, with great humour, that some Roumanian Jews, with long curls, in greasy gaberdines and shaggy top-hats, had tried to penetrate into camp, with a view to barter and exchange, having a stock of articles to deal in: secondhand underclothing, buttons, thread, tobacco, stationery, indecent photographs, and what not. They retired only when the rifles were levelled at them, with loud, discordant lamentations and vehement gesticulations. The Jews are the same all the world over; peace or war, they *must* have their little bargain.

The redoubt which my battalion occupied was one of those four called by the Russians 'Grivitza redoubts.' We named them 'Janik Bair tabiyalar,' from the hill which formed their base.⁶⁵ The northern slope of the redoubt, facing the enemy, bordered upon the ravine which played such a conspicuous part in the first battle. It had one ditch or trench for the protection of skirmishers on the southern side of the ravine, and two, rising one above the other, on the crest of the opposite bank. There were on each flank trenches running at obtuse angles to the redoubt, whence an attacking enemy could be taken by a flank fire with disastrous results. It was due to these side-trenches that the Russian attempts in the next action failed so thoroughly. The garrison consisted of two battalions, a battery of five guns (a gun of this battery had been wrecked on July 20), and a small body of Circassians for reconnoitring, outpost, and ordnance duties.

A second redoubt, nearly in a line with ours, and adjoining it to our right, was occupied by two battalions and half a battery. On our left, a little in advance, half a mile from us, near Bukova, and facing north-west (whilst we faced

due north), were two smaller redoubts, each containing a battalion and one or two guns.

These four redoubts, two large and two small, formed together a solid stronghold, shaped naturally out of the Janik Bair, garrisoned by a brigade (six battalions, say 3,500 men, with eleven guns). The length of the stronghold, east to west, was three and a half miles. It cut at right angles across the Nikopoli road.

The trenches were four feet deep. I estimate the height of the redoubts at twenty feet, exclusive of the natural elevation of the ground.

On our left flank we were exposed, but had an isolated, fortified advance-post two and a half miles to the north-west, near Opanetz, composed of two battalions, guarding the approaches to the Vid. Another similar post, three miles south of the former, composed of one battalion, held the bridge by means of which the Orkanyé road crosses the Vid.

Bukova (outside our position) was commanded by the two smaller redoubts I have mentioned; I shall, therefore, call these the 'Bukova redoubts.'

On our right flank was a powerful fortification, facing east, and occupied by three battalions and two half-batteries, each of the latter in a compact, square-shaped redoubt. These are the 'Grivitza redoubts Nos. 1 and 2' of the Russians; we called them later Bash Tabiyalar (Head Batteries); henceforward I shall adopt this name in referring to them.

The fortifications above mentioned combined to form our left wing. It was under the command of Adil Pasha, who had at his disposal a division (twelve battalions), three batteries, two squadrons of regular cavalry, and a detachment of Circassians.

Our right wing, under Hassan Sabri Pasha, faced south. The strength of the two wings was identical.

Osman had thirty-three battalions, fifty-seven guns, six squadrons of regulars, two squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks,

and 400 irregulars; total, 20,000 men.⁶⁷ The Lovdcha garrison is not included. Deducting the forces on the two wings, a general reserve was left of nine battalions, three and a half batteries, and four squadrons. Of these battalions, one garrisoned Plevna. The batteries and the squadrons were established on the crest of the hill east of the town on which the Mushir had his headquarters. The remaining reserve of eight battalions bivouacked on the southern and eastern slopes of this hill. The twenty-two guns commanded two thirds of the battle-field.

Having assisted in the preparation of the plans, my recollection of these arrangements is vivid. I believe that Osman's fortifications and dispositions are looked upon as models; I need not, therefore, apologise for dwelling on them.

The extreme dimensions of the Turkish position were, approximately: Vid bridge west to Bash Tabiyas east, seven miles; Opanetz north to 'Green Hill' south, six miles.

Our redoubt was hollowed out and divided into chambers serving as sleeping-quarters, storehouses, and stables. In the construction we had to do almost without timber, as there are hardly any trees on the hills north and east of Plevna; those south and west are wooded, and contain many fine orchards and vineyards. The fruit-trees were left untouched, by order, probably because they furnished such good and abundant food.

The roof was formed by odd boards—pieces of demolished furniture—and propped up by tent-poles. The walls were strengthened by means of stones roughly hewn into shape. The floor was covered with the sun-dried skins of slaughtered beasts, thick layers of straw, sheepskins, and blankets to lie on. Every man or body of men who had to go into Plevna or any of the surrounding villages brought something back thence—some implement, tool, or domestic utensil. The Turks gave willingly, the Bulgarians from motives of fear. I am afraid many things were seized forcibly—'borrowed,' as we used to call it. We had no money, but written acknowledg-

ments were given, if required ; it is safe to assume that these were never exchanged for cash. Thus we increased our comfort from day to day. Sergeant Bakal, with his wonderful adroitness, his never-failing resources, his thousand-and-one accomplishments, was invaluable to my squad, and our quarters served as a model to many others. The disposal of sewage caused much anxious consideration. Seymour and I exacted scrupulous cleanliness. The Turks are less particular in this respect, but we persuaded the first-lieutenant to adopt our plans ; soon other companies followed our example, and in the end our redoubt was the healthiest in camp.

We insisted on our men washing themselves and their clothes, scrubbing the boards, utensils, &c., as much as the supply of water—by no means unlimited—would allow. The scarcity of disinfectants was a serious drawback ; but I managed to obtain from the apothecary of an ambulance some permanganate of potash, insect-powder, and carbolic acid. Soap we ‘borrowed’ in Plevna ; that given with the rations was insufficient, and the supply not regular. The same remark applies to candles. We had to husband our resources, and thus only one soap ablution per diem was allotted to each man. With the insect-powder I had to be as sparing as if it were diamond-dust ; but the Turks did not mind certain tiny guests whom Jack and I objected to. The spring which Bakal had discovered provided our drinking-water ; the bulk of this priceless material had to be obtained daily from the Grivitza, a mile south, in casks piled on ox-carts. Arrangements were made for draining the redoubt and catching the rain-water in tubs.

Everything that could serve as shelter to an advancing enemy in front of our lines was destroyed. The shrubs thus obtained were employed as fuel, after having been dried in the sun.

Our redoubt was finished by July 29 ; but many others were not completed until after the battle, especially as regards the hollowing-out. In most cases the troops slept

in mud huts or under canvas. I have seen a splendid mahogany wardrobe accommodating six men, shelved like passengers in a vessel. A dining-room table was transformed into a bed-closet.

The general scheme of the fortifications which constituted the stronghold of Plevna was not completed until the end of August, while the west front was not fortified until October. Roughly speaking, we had on August 31 twice as many redoubts as on July 30. Thus the Russian writers who describe the fortifications of Plevna as having been completed already towards the end of July are entirely wrong.

In the afternoon of the 29th it became known that an engagement was imminent. The superior officers were summoned to headquarters, and before nightfall we all had our detailed instructions. The major called us officers together and addressed us.

The men were in high spirits, assured of victory; the general *morale* was all that could be desired.

Our arrangements were complete before darkness set in. We had 500 cartridges to each man, eighty per man carried in the pouches, the rest stored in the redoubt. The bread-bags were filled with biscuits, the flasks with cold coffee. There was an abundance of food in our store-chambers. Tubs with drinking-water were placed in the trenches. Carts stood ready to send the wounded to the rear; the horses were harnessed and saddled, ready to remove the guns and spare ammunition in case the redoubt should be taken. Swords and bayonets were sharpened, rifles inspected and cleaned, and the surgeon tested his knives, probes, and saws.

The ferik (Adil Pasha) inspected us as we were drawn up in a line, presenting arms. He expressed satisfaction at the condition of the redoubt, and lingered for a while over our domestic arrangements. The sanitary system which Jack and I had installed brought a smile of good-natured contempt to his handsome features. The Turk is apt to underrate the importance of cleanliness.

The bulk of the men went to sleep at ten, lying down

fully dressed. The outposts were strengthened, and there were continuous inspection and constant reconnoitring during the hours of darkness. The captain and the first-lieutenant were away on these duties all night, so the temporary command of the company devolved on me. Jack and I slept in turns of two hours.

During my watch I sat on a camp-stool on the parapet, scanning the horizon with my glasses, and straining every nerve to catch the slightest suspicious noise; but no sights or sounds betrayed the proximity of the enemy. Beside me artillerymen stood sentry over their guns; in front, sentinels paced the bank of the nearest trench. To the right and left officers were engaged in an occupation similar to mine—that is, doing nothing but watching and waiting.

During the first part of the night we had clear weather; towards morning it grew thick; a heavy white mist settled over the landscape. At two Jack released me, and I went below.

I had no evil forebodings and no fear of the morrow.*

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.



CHAPTER VIII

THE SECOND BATTLE OF PLEVNA

JULY 30, 1877

AT six on the morning of Monday, July 30, we stood ready in our positions, in an impenetrable white mist.

The battalion which, together with mine, formed the garrison of our redoubt was divided into eight companies, nominally of 100 men each, actually of eighty to eighty-five, each company being sub-divided into two squads, under lieutenants.

Our battalion having four companies, there were thus twelve companies for our redoubt and its dependencies, which I shall call A, B, C, D, and *m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t*, respectively. These must be understood to be my own denominations, introduced for the sake of clearness and brevity. A to D represent the four larger companies (of my battalion), of 150 to 160 men each; *m* to *t*, the eight smaller companies, of eighty to eighty-five men each. My company is called *c*.

These twelve companies were distributed as follows: *m* in the first, *n* in the second trench (counting from the outside); *o* and *p* on the southern slope and bank of the ravine, where the thick shrubbery had been left undisturbed; *q* in the third trench—all those mentioned hitherto being extended in long lines of skirmishers; *r* and *s* in the left (western), *A* in the right (eastern) side-trench; *B* and *C* in the redoubt, *D* and *t*, as reserve, in rear of redoubt. Inside the redoubt were also the five guns, with their eighty or ninety artillerymen, the colonel, and the two majors, with their staffs, and a

dozen Circassians for *ordonnance* duty; in rear, with the reserve, were the two squadrons of regulars belonging to our division, and a body of Circassians. The ferik and his staff were with us at the beginning of the battle; afterwards they went to the redoubt on our right, where things did not go so smoothly as with us.

The instructions for retreat were as follows: *m* on *n*; *m* and *n* on *o* and *p*; *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, on *q*; then, dividing, *m*, *n*, *o*, on *r* and *s* (left), *p* and *q* on *A* (right); then, both side-trenches to redoubt; should the redoubt be taken, the whole body southward to the Bulgareni road; lastly, to the hills immediately east of Plevna.

My company was in the redoubt, where we were protected from everything save shells. We had the parapet against infantry-fire and as a rest for our rifles, being thus able to aim steadily. The three squads were posted to the right of the battery, in a single line. I had the middle station; Jack to my left, adjoining the battery; Mehemed, the outside station, on my right; Ibrahim and the colour squad were behind me. The company mustered 155 officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, exclusive of non-combatants; twelve men were in the ambulances.

The morning passed in a tedious manner. From 6 to 6.30 we waited, all on the alert, but nothing occurred. At 6.30 we heard the clatter of hoofs to our left, on the Nikopoli road, coming towards us; a few minutes later permission was given to the men to sit or lie down, with two look-outs from each squad on the parapet, some men to go below to assist the arabjis in cooking breakfast. The captain added that the enemy would not arrive yet for hours.

The men sat or squatted on the ground. Jack and I mounted the parapet, and scanned the curling vapours with our glasses; but gazing at a blank soon becomes monotonous, so we got down, after having instructed the look-out men to be vigilant—a useless caution when with the greatest exertion nothing could be seen, and the only sounds that

reached us were those proceeding from our own troops in the trenches.

Not far from us was a group of officers (the various staffs), who sat or stood around a table improvised out of a crate, where they examined a map. Our captain dozed in a kitchen-chair (stolen Heaven knows where!); when Jack and I stepped down from the parapet, he opened his eyes and smiled, cunningly and maliciously: he knew our youthful zeal would soon cool amid such depressing surroundings. These damp vapours were enough to freeze an active volcano.

Breakfast--brought up to us, and consisting of boiled rice and bread baked overnight--revived our spirits wonderfully.

Mehemed actually proposed chess; he had 'borrowed' the implements from our late quarters in town. In the friendly shelter of Sergeant Bakal's broad back he played his last game on this side of the grave. I hope the houris in his paradise are adepts. He beat me, but not quite so easily as on former occasions; over which circumstance he pondered a good deal. Permission to smoke was given, but talking was prohibited.

At eight a gun was fired on the Bash Tabiyas, probably by way of sign or warning. Up jumped the captain, down went the chessmen into a convenient hole; the dozers awoke with a start, and tried to appear as if they had not slept, which marked them at once, and attracted the captain's little blinking, green eyes; dozens of cigarettes flew over the parapet like a preliminary pyrotechnic display. There was a movement among the group of officers; aides-de-camp and orderlies ran to and fro, commands were given, men rode away at a gallop and were swallowed up by the mist, which continued as thick as ever. To judge by the sound a large body of horsemen trotted northward on the Nikopoli road; these returned *ventre à terre* twenty minutes later. An order was issued to the artillerymen; their officers trained the guns to the proper position. There was a commotion: someone was hailed by the sentries on the parapet; the captain and

I climbed up, and perceived below the indistinct figure of a mulazim. He shouted:—

‘The captain in the first trench sends a message that the enemy has appeared in strong numbers in front of his position. Advanced posts report having heard noise sufficient to proceed from half a dozen battalions and several batteries; there seems to be no cavalry.’

The captain reported this to the major. There was a brief consultation around the table.

Adil Pasha came to where I stood, and climbed up with the help of my hand, being no longer as young, slim, and agile as he undoubtedly used to be. This conversation took place:—

Adil: ‘Have you heard any firing?’

Mulazim: ‘None, sir, save the gun in the east.’

Adil: ‘Whence do you come?’

Mulazim: ‘From the first trench, sir.’

Adil: ‘Have your advanced posts come in?’

Mulazim: ‘They have, sir, as soon as they perceived the enemy to be in proximity; but the ordinary sentries are still in front of the line.’

Adil: ‘Go back, sir, and tell your captain and that of the second trench not to incur losses over their ditches. They are to be evacuated as soon as deemed desirable. The ravine and the third trench, on the contrary, are to be held until resistance is no longer possible.’

The mulazim disappeared in the fog; the Pasha climbed down, asked me: ‘Have you a light, sir?’ (what a passion these Turks have for their cigarettes! I knew men who smoked a hundred a day), and joined his officers.

The artillerymen re-trained their pieces, and at 8.30 our five guns commenced to fire; the three of the redoubt on our right followed. A few minutes later the Russians responded—that is, we heard detonations a mile or so north, and occasionally the whizzing of shells; but nothing could be seen, not even the projectiles; I do not know where they fell—they did not strike us.

This went on for half an hour; then it grew a little clearer, so that we could see the flashes of the Russian batteries, like lightning in a white cloud. Our gunners re-directed their pieces accordingly.

At ten it grew sufficiently clear to see the enemy's lines through the glasses. A vehement cannonade commenced also in the south and south-east.

All the time we could do nothing but wait—'wait until we are struck,' as one of my men grimly remarked, whom I reproved accordingly.

We could now see the shells overhead. The range of the Russian guns was much too great. They must have been re-trained, for suddenly the projectiles commenced to fall in the space between ravine and redoubt. I counted through my glasses—judging by the locality of the flashes—forty guns, against which we had but eight on this spot. But our men fired very well; in my experience, the Turkish artillery—the best-trained arm of the Ottoman forces—was superior to the Russian in everything save numbers.

It now grew clearer from minute to minute; the infantry attack was sure to take place as soon as the mist had gone. I made free to suggest to the captain to get the men to eat and drink; he acquiesced, so they went in relays to the water-tubs, established in convenient positions, and soaked their biscuits. The arabjis refilled the casks.

At eleven it was perfectly clear, and the sun shone with merciless power. It grew terribly hot. At 11.15 we were struck, the shot damaging the earthworks in front. It must have been midday when the first shell exploded in the redoubt. Two men from my squad were struck by splinters and were carried below. Three more shots exploded among us, two harmlessly, the last killing a gunner and wounding two of Jack's men, one in a ghastly manner, the bowels hanging out; he died soon after. Two or three shots struck the company (B) stationed to the left of the battery, but I do not know what punishment they inflicted.

After that the range of the Russian shells quitted us again

and went to our left, where the projectiles exploded harmlessly in the vacant fields.

I suggested to the captain to have the earthworks patched up, not because this was necessary, but because it would occupy the men, who had become fidgety. This was done.

Contrary to our expectation, no infantry attack took place; in fact, as yet not a single rifle had been discharged on either side. We had some more hours of nerve-straining suspense to go through, during which the thunder of the guns never ceased for a second. It came from all sides: the two Bukova redoubts and the two Bash Tabiyas were doing their best with their few pieces; the south seemed like one mass of continual explosions; and also in the far north-west, near Opanetz, I saw through my glasses the flashes of discharging cannon, like electric sparks in the hazy, sunlit distance.

Our redoubt was not again struck that day; but that on our right received twenty or more shells.

We utilised the enforced leisure by refilling our flasks with water and our bread-bags with biscuits. Later in the day the men of my company had reason to feel grateful for this precaution.

At 2.30 the fire relaxed on both sides, and just before 3 the first volley of musketry was heard in front of us. After a few minutes the rifle-fire approached us ('the Russians have taken the first trench!' said Mehemed, who stood with me on the parapet), and after another interval the sound again increased in volume ('The second trench is gone!'); then, for fifteen minutes, the fire remained at a uniform intensity: they were fighting for the ravine. We heard stray bullets cutting the air above us. The redoubt on our right was similarly engaged; sounds of volleys came also from the Bash Tabiyas and from behind us. At 3.30 we saw dense masses of our men, betraying symptoms of confusion, join those stationed in the nearest trench.⁶⁸

They defended this obstinately for five minutes ; but the smoke withdrew the details of the fight from my vision.

The bullets now came thick and fast ; it is a wonder that Mehemed and I were not struck ; but the idea did not occur to me until the captain shouted, ' Get down ! '

Our men were in position, only their heads exposed, all rifles loaded. Three of our five guns had been trained to fire at point-blank range, and were waiting for the enemy to appear ; the other two continued to shell the five Russian batteries which honoured us with their ineffectual attention.

Suddenly a confused mass of men emerged from the last ditch (the five companies, *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, and *q*), and, dividing into two parts, ran towards the side-trenches with more haste than dignity. There was now a sea of heads in the right side-trench, which I could overlook from where I stood. I saw the officers making strenuous and successful efforts to reorganise the men. Before the Russians appeared the whole body (three companies, *A*, *p*, *q*) was in position and ready to fire.

I noticed that the horses were got out for removing our guns.

A few minutes after our skirmishers had reached shelter the assailants appeared.

They seemed to have no advance-line of skirmishers. Serried ranks of infantry—three battalions, I believe—climbed in a solid body the bank of the last ditch, and advanced in a line parallel to the redoubt. The attack was thus perfectly frontal, without any attempt to circumvent our position. Jack and I agreed afterwards that this would have been a comparatively easy matter, as there was a space half a mile wide, denuded of troops, between us and the Bukova redoubts, practicable for the advance of large masses of infantry.⁶⁹

Hardly had the Russians appeared when a dozen bugles sounded ' Fire,' and a terrific quickfire, coming from three

sides (the redoubt and both side-trenches, defended by ten companies), and joined by the thunder of the guns, brought the enemy's advance to a dead-stop.

The Russians retreated to the trench and the declivity beyond, whence they directed a violent fire on us without inflicting punishment. After a while they renewed the attack, this time with a smaller body of men (one battalion, I should think), in a long-drawn-out line, which afforded a less advantageous target than the dense masses of the first attempt.

Dropping men at every step, they rushed towards us with cries of 'Hurrah!' amidst a terrific fire from the flanks and the front. The battalion must have been as good as annihilated before it came within charging distance. The survivors went back, and were swallowed up by a second line, which had meanwhile commenced to advance. A third followed at a short distance. These two got as far as the foot of the redoubt, and proceeded to climb the slope, which formed an angle of forty-five degrees. There was for a few moments a confusion such as I could not have conceived in the boldest flight of my imagination. I jumped upon the parapet, Ibrahim and his men beside me, the colours fluttering proudly above us. I discharged the six chambers of my revolver at hardly twelve paces distance. Soon all the men were on the parapet; the Russians surged towards, and recoiled from, the slope like the waves of a tempestuous ocean; there was a mighty roar, coming from some thousands of throats, a roar which rose and fell like that of the storm-tormented surf; the guns fired into the charging mass; in the side-trenches volley succeeded volley with terrific rapidity and murderous effect, and back went the Russian lines in a state of hopeless chaos, the ground strewn with dead and dying. Mehemed and some men rushed down the slope, but the captain shouted and waved his sabre frantically, and they had to come back, with the aid of ropes held out to them. 'All men behind the parapet' was the next command, and from our old positions we pursued the Russians with a

merciless fire, until they had disappeared in the trench and the ravine.⁷⁰

It was only now that I perceived the captain leaning heavily against the parapet, the blood streaming from his shoulder. He had received a shot just as he was preparing to jump down. He was led below, and Mehemed took command of the company.

There was now a cessation of fire on both sides, and we had time to ascertain our losses. My company had one killed and seven severely wounded; these were taken below, where they received the first-aid. Afterwards they were removed to Plevna in the carts which stood ready for the purpose.

Two of our five guns had been taken out of the redoubt whilst the charge was in progress. These were now brought back.

The majority of the Russians lying below (400, I should think) seemed to be dead; I presume, therefore, that the assailants took many wounded with them, a difficult matter in the confusion of a repulsed charge. A good many wounded were carried into the side-trenches by our men.

Soon the Russians recommenced to fire from the third trench in a desultory manner.

One is apt to feel hungry and thirsty after a violent conflict, however brief. Deeming it probable that the troops who had just charged us would not again come up to the scratch, and that it would take the enemy some time to get fresh battalions to the spot, I suggested to Mehemed to allow the men to eat and drink. This was done.

Half an hour later a second assault took place, by fresh troops apparently—two battalions, so far as I could judge. The incidents were much the same as before. The enemy, unmindful of the fire from the side-trenches, got again as far as the foot of the redoubt, and was repulsed with heavy loss. Our major had meanwhile issued strict orders that no one should climb the parapet. Thus we had but two fresh casualties in my company. One was the first-lieutenant, whose stalwart form—he was over six feet—must have been

a conspicuous object above the four-foot parapet. He was shot through the head, and fell lifeless on his back. Exit Mulazim Mehemed Hardar!

'Checkmate at last,' said Jack to me during the temporary lull. 'He was as brave as a lion, although a bit of a slow-coach. What a glorious death! I say, aren't those Russians fools to break their heads against the solid wall of the redoubt? Why don't they try the side-trenches first?' To which I agreed.

I was now in command of the company, reduced to 140 combatants. I placed the first squad in charge of Tereb, the colour squad under Ibrahim's corporal, and mine under Sergeant Bakal. I had the dead removed out of sight, and nothing but the dark spots on the brown soil betrayed that they had existed. In warfare a man is forgotten in less minutes than it takes months in everyday life. The earth has an unquenchable thirst, but it must almost have drunk its fill on that bloody day.

There seemed to be a cessation of hostilities on all points of our wing; but in the south the battle continued with unabated fury.

Soon after the second charge I heard the major sing out: 'Who commands this company?' Someone replied, 'Mulazim Herbert.' I presented myself to my superior, who said in substance, though not so coherently as I have put it, being breathless and excited:

'The Mushir has sent for reinforcements. On our right wing affairs are in a precarious condition: the Russians have taken two redoubts, and are advancing south of the Bulgareni road; if they succeed in throwing the right wing into Plevna *we* shall be taken between two fires and our retreat will be cut off. The reserves have been used up. The ferik has already sent our own reserves;⁷¹ now two more companies from this redoubt are asked for. Take yours—an orderly from headquarters will show you the way; a company from the left side-trench shall follow, and two companies from the right side-trench will take your place in

the redoubt. Do your best ; remember you are commanding a company, and that from this moment until the end of the battle you will have no superior save the Mushir ; thus you have the full and sole responsibility. You are but a boy, in a position which would legitimately puzzle and unnerve a man twice your age ; rise to the occasion, as Englishmen are wont to do. The soldiers love you ; you and your compatriot have but to lead, and they will follow. Bear in mind the Czar Nicholas' grim and furious exclamation in the Crimean War : " We have been beaten by a handful of savages led by British boys." ' 72

As I collected my men two companies (*p* and *q*) came up from the right side-trench, and there was a momentary confusion. Soon we got clear and marched out, southward. A mounted man was waiting for us.

We had two and a half miles to march, which we accomplished in little more than half an hour.

Some minutes after we had started I noticed that men were following us who did not belong to my company. Without stopping the march I ascertained that these belonged to one of the skirmishing companies (*p*) which had taken shelter in the right side-trench. Under ordinary circumstances I should have consulted Sergeant Bakal ; my new-born dignity as a company leader forbade this. There were forty men, under a lieutenant—a stripling, with the pluck of a bulldog—who had misunderstood his directions, or, possibly, had received none. A brief reflection convinced me that they were wanted more in the south, where things looked black, than with the troops in the north, who had been victorious ; so I incorporated them temporarily in my company, having thus 180 men, divided into four squads, not counting the colour squad.

We crossed the Grivitza by means of the bridge which lies half-way between Plevna and Grivitza,⁷³ then trotted for half a mile on the Bulgareni road westward, turned to the left across fields, and approached a gently sloping hill, in front of that occupied by headquarters and the centre batteries,

which were firing incessantly. Behind the latter lay Plevna. I saw masses of Russian infantry a mile to the left; ours was on the crest of the hill, evidently reorganising itself. The ground between the two lines was strewn with corpses. Two of our redoubts, farther south, were in Russian hands, as I could see by means of my glasses. From the extreme southwest, beyond the Tultehenitza ravine, came the sounds of violent conflict.

The slope of the hill, partly fields, partly devastated maize plots, was perfectly bare; there were no hedges, fences, or ditches, no sheds, huts, or houses.

I overlooked a battle-field of, perhaps, twenty square miles in area—an aspect of indescribable grandeur, which utterly surpasses the abilities of my feeble pen, grown halting in its ceaseless endeavours to procure for me the humble, necessary crust.

But even more awful than the effect upon the vision was that on the sense of hearing. The uninterrupted thunder of 240 guns—like the angry growl of a horde of roused watch-dogs in the distance, like the crashes of a whole mountain-range of active volcanoes in our vicinity—seemed to imply that the *dies iræ* had come, *quæ solvet sæcula in favilla*. Beneath me the earth trembled like a living thing in the throes of terrific fever-heat, whose nerves had been strained to breaking-point. I felt as if I stood in the centre of a raging conflagration; the scene was one immense furnace, and a piece of history was being cast and moulded and hammered into shape.

A mounted officer rode up to meet us, gesticulating to us vehemently to make haste. I went up to him (it was the aide-de-camp, Talahat Bey), and reported myself as temporary leader of the company.

This was our hurried conversation.

He: 'Are your men fresh?'

I: 'Not quite, sir, but thoroughly brave and willing.'

He: 'Can you take a place in the first line?'

I: 'Certainly we can, sir.'

He : 'Then come along, and hurry up.'

We ran the rest of the way, and were soon amidst a mass of infantry, seven or eight battalions, who appeared to me to be in thorough confusion, and much demoralised.

A first line of attack had already been formed, into which we were incorporated.

Later I ascertained the following details :—⁷⁴

The first line consisted of my company ; the two companies (D and *t*) which had formed the reserve of our redoubt, and had not fought yet ; an entire battalion, also fresh, the last of the general reserve of eight battalions ; a company (*r*) which had come close upon our heels from the left side-trench of my redoubt ; with two squadrons of regular cavalry on each flank : total, say, 1,000 foot soldiers and 350 mounted men, under the command of Talahat Bey.

The second line consisted of two battalions from the mass of defeated infantry, which had been reorganised and had recovered a little ; two companies, nearly fresh, sent from the redoubt on the right of mine ; and a large body of scattered and re-collected skirmishers and stragglers belonging to half a dozen battalions, hastily formed into two or three companies, and placed under officers who had lost their troops ; with a squadron of Ottoman Cossacks on one flank and a body of Circassians on the other : total, say, 1,500 foot soldiers and 150 mounted men, under the personal command of the Mushir.

The third line consisted of two more reorganised battalions from the defeated infantry aforesaid (which two battalions had, however, lost half of their companies, strayed, scattered, or annihilated) and two companies of the battalion which had garrisoned Plevna, fresh, but arriving too late to take a place in the first or second line (the other companies of this battalion were hotly engaged beyond the Tultchenitza ravine) ; with half a squadron of regular cavalry, a body of irregulars, and a detachment of mounted artillerymen (serving for the nonce as cavalry), divided between the two flanks :

total, say, 800 foot soldiers and 100 mounted men, under Tahir Pasha.

A fourth and last line consisted of another reorganised battalion from the defeated infantry; another scratch company or two of collected skirmishers and strayers; and four companies sent at the last moment from the Bukova redoubts (here the fighting had not been severe, and the troops were, therefore, nearly fresh); with half a squadron of Ottoman Cossacks on one flank and a miscellaneous body of horsemen scattered in previous charges on the other; total, say, 700 foot soldiers and 100 mounted men, under Hassan Sabri Pasha.

Total of the four lines: 4,000 foot soldiers and 700 mounted men.

In rear of the four lines, as last reserve and protection to the batteries, a disorganised mass of 2,000 foot soldiers, gradually re-forming themselves and recovering that stubborn bravery which makes the Turkish infantry so formidable when it is on the defensive.

The third and fourth lines were not formed until the first and second had nearly spent their energies in repeated charges and the repulse of counter-charges.

All four lines and the greater part of the reserve got successively to close quarters with the enemy.

There were six or eight charges and counter-charges before the Russians retreated.

I arranged my company as follows: Seymour's and Sergeant Bakal's squads side by side in first line, three deep; Tereb's squad in second line, two deep; the squad from Company *p* in third line, in single file. I stood between the two squads of the front line, the bugler, the drummers and the colour squad beside and behind me.

As near as I can judge it was now 6.30.

The cannonade in the north had recommenced almost as soon as we had left our redoubt. The three and a half centre batteries, increased by two which had been got out of the lost redoubts, with the exception of two guns (recovered

afterwards), were directing a murderous fire on the Russian lines in front of us. I noticed that some guns on the Bash Tabiyas had faced round and were shelling the same enemy. The hostile artillery-fire on this spot appeared to me lax and ineffective ; no shells struck our first line. It ceased as soon as the advance commenced.

Having, so far, refrained from stating my personal sensations during this battle, I may be allowed to add here that I felt no nervousness, probably because the excitement was so intense and the activity so feverish that I had no time for reflection. We were at high pressure. There is one feeling which I recall gladly : that of witnessing, and having an individual, however, infinitesimal, share in, the making of history. Of this glorious sensation you that stoop over your office-desks or haggle behind your shop-counters cannot have the faintest guess of a notion.

The Russian troops commenced to move. When they were within easy range we hailed them with a quickfire of two to three minutes' duration. I noticed deep gaps in their lines, which were promptly filled up.

They were allowed to approach as far as the foot of the hill. Then one bugle sounded the charge ; a dozen others responded ; the bayonets were lowered ; the huge column commenced to move, first slowly, increasing in velocity, the efforts of all officers being directed towards the maintenance of a straight line.

The command, 'Feel each others' elbows!' flew from mouth to mouth.

Down the slope we rushed, the aide-de-camp leading. This officer (Talahat Bey) behaved with admirable bravery and determination throughout those trying and critical moments.

'Close up there!' I shouted, noticing a gap in my front line.

Nearer and nearer we came ; we heard the Russians 'Hurrah!' ; wild cries of 'Allah!' were started, and drowned individual voices ; commands became useless.

Now only a hundred paces between the charging lines—they uphill, we downhill—and at last there was a collision like that between two railway trains.

I wish my pen were sufficiently capable to give some notion of the awful confusion of such a contact. A chaos of stabbing, clubbing, hacking, clutching, shouting, cursing, screaming men; knots of two or three on the ground, still fighting, and clinging to each other in their death agonies; above the surging mass of heads the butt-ends of rifles rising and falling like the cranks of numberless overheated engines; the mounted men with swords working at lightning speed; the colours bravely leading the way; horses charging into solid bodies of men, rolling over, burying beings already mutilated beneath them; frantic faces streaming with blood; the air reeking with the breath of thousands of panting creatures, like the hot winds of the desert—all the mad-houses of the world discharging their contents into this seething cauldron of human passion and iniquity; Dante's *Inferno* let loose, a legion of demons from Hades run riot.

As to my personal experience, I remember nothing. The actual contact, the psychological moment of such a charge, lasts but a minute or so; and such a lifetime of experience is crowded into it that memory is hopelessly at fault. All I know is that I discharged the six chambers of my revolver, but at whom I have no notion; that my sabre was stained with blood, but with whose I cannot tell; and that suddenly we looked at one another in blank surprise—for the Russians had gone, save those on the ground, and we were among friends, all frantic, breathless, perspiring; many bleeding, the lines broken, the tactical units dissolved; most of us jabbering, shouting, laughing, cursing, dancing about like maniacs.

The next thing I remember is the bugle command, 'Fire,' and we sped the retreating enemy with volley upon volley.

Then the aide-de-camp rode up, and shouted to me to re-form my company, as the Russians would undoubtedly return to the charge.

I managed to discover Jack, Ibrahim, Sergeant Bakal,

all uninjured, the lieutenant from Company *p* with a gash in the cheek. Excepting the sergeant, we were panting, and acting like lunatics; the latter, perfectly cool, crunched a biscuit whilst he searched for his men. We found two-thirds of the company; many were on the ground, others had gone astray. I re-formed my four squads, with a dozen strangers incorporated in their lines.

Fifteen or twenty minutes after the first charge the Russians returned. This time we did not advance to encounter them, but met them, stationary, with quickfire until they were close upon us, when they ran against a bristling wall of bayonets. I do not know by whose orders this took place, probably by nobody's; more likely it was a silent agreement among us. The enemy's charge was less vigorous than before; no sooner were they in bodily contact with us when the opposing lines dissolved again into their elements and the Russians withdrew.

I noticed no hostile cavalry. Ours behaved tolerably well; it was inferior to our infantry in point of coolness and stubbornness, and had not the dash one is justified in expecting from trained horsemen.

Of this second charge one item is deeply impressed on my memory. A giant on a horse to match—a colonel, I think—galloped up to me, and dealt me a terrific blow from above. I parried as well as I could—had I not done so he would have split my skull in two; but his sword cut across my upturned face, across nose and chin, where the mark is visible to this day. I felt the hot blood trickle down my throat. When I looked out for my opponent, he had been swallowed by the surging sea of humanity around me.

When we were again left to ourselves, not having yielded an inch of ground, Bakal spoke to me, pointing to my face; Jack said something in a compassionate voice. I replied; but what they said and what I answered I cannot recall, for I was bewildered, and my memory is utterly confused—it was so even immediately after the battle. As in a trance I noticed that the troops of our second line came up; that they

pushed forward in front of us, and stationed themselves below us, at the bottom of the hill ; that we opened a violent and long-sustained fire. Vaguely I recollect that I perceived my garments on throat and breast to be soaked ; that my face began to burn unmercifully and my head to swim ; that I found myself kneeling, with a willing hand held out to me for support ; and then all is a blank.

It seemed to me as if I had been insensible for weeks, whereas it can only have been an hour, or less. It was still daylight when I awoke. The firing in the neighbourhood had ceased, but from afar came the angry growl of the cannonade.

The sight that met my opening eyes was one so ghastly that I do not care to recall it. It comes to me unbidden in moments—too frequent, alas !—of suicidal tendency.

Imagine the interior of a low, long, roughly built shed (I do not know whether it had been erected by our troops, or had originally served as a storehouse or barn). Imagine a thick, hot, reeking atmosphere, filled with indescribable odours, enough to sicken you by the very recollection. Imagine some hundreds of men—yourself among them, with a raging thirst devouring you, a burning pain in the face, every particle of strength and vitality gone—lying on the bare boards, with bundles of rags or filthy straw for pillows, many insensible, many dead or dying, many in convulsions, some horribly mutilated, all bleeding, most of them groaning, others screaming, or pitifully whining for a drop of water, in half a dozen languages. Oh that cry for ‘ Su ! ’—how often have I heard it ! After the lapse of seventeen years it follows me into my wildest dreams. Imagine surgeons, with tucked-up shirt-sleeves and bloody hands, giving the first-aid ; for this was a temporary ambulance, in rear of the lines. Imagine callous men dealing out homœopathic doses of water, or laudanum, or brandy. Imagine everything that is most horrible, disgusting, sickening, hideous, heartrending, within the range of your conception, and you will have a faint notion of this hell of man’s creation.

Recollection gradually returned to me. My head had been bandaged, the nose plastered all over. Water was given to me. I shall feel eternally grateful for this delicious drink.

I closed my eyes, to shut out the horrors around me. Oh, could I but have closed my ears! I dozed uneasily. Presently my arm was touched. It was a young private from my squad, a clerk by profession, who had been my companion on the journey from Constantinople to Widdin. Candles and lanterns were now burning. What a subject for Doré, these alternating patches of light and shade, with the horrors revealed by the crude glare, like bold sketches in black and white, and the worse horrors suggested by the shadows!

The man said, in substance :

‘Don’t talk, sir ; you are very weak ; you must have lost a bucket of blood. Mulazim Seymour sends me ; he, being now in command of the company, cannot come himself, but sends his greeting. He has a bruise on the arm from a rifle butt-end. Mulazim Ibrahim and Chawush Bakal have not received a scratch. The company lost ten men since you left us. We are now bivouacking on the hill whence we charged ; fifty men have gone astray, but I daresay they will turn up in the redoubt. Everything is in a frightful confusion ; whole battalions are without officers, and scores of officers are wandering about in search of their troops. Everything is upside down. When the men of our company have recovered a little we shall go back to the redoubt. Mulazim Seymour meant to return thither at once, but the men fell down like lead with fatigue. The battle is won at all points ; towards the end the Russians simply ran away. There has been awful slaughter ; the last action was child’s-play compared to this. Now, sir, Mulazim Seymour advises you to walk at once to Plevna, for which purpose he has instructed me to accompany and support you. Going in the carts is painful for a wounded man ; besides, you will not have a chance yet for hours to find a place in one, as they send the urgent cases first, and by then the

ambulances may be full. The Chawush, who bound your wound up and then spoke to a surgeon, thinks it is not severe, although the chin was divided to the bone and the flesh stood wide apart. It looked ugly. You fainted from loss of blood, and will soon be strong again.'

He had said all this glibly, probably in order to prevent me from talking. Having finished, he helped me on my feet, got me some brandy—which he stole from the apothecary's stock when the latter's back was turned—and off we went, he with his right arm around my waist, I with my left on his shoulder. Dusk had set in. There was still the faint thunder of cannon in the far north-east.

The distance to the eastern outskirts of Plevna was a mile, and half a mile more to the ambulance of which I had been an inmate before. The walk was very painful for me, I being so weak that I had to rely entirely upon my companion's strength, who was tired enough to require support on his own behalf.

From every side came long processions of conveyances of all shapes and sizes, from the spacious waggon to the decrepit wheelbarrow, drawn by oxen, horses, mules, donkeys, dogs, men. The coarse track and the roughly built vehicles must have been sources of exquisite torture to the mutilated passengers, who were huddled up on straw, and whose groans were heartrending. Groups of wounded, supported like myself, or carried by comrades, or borne on stretchers, more often on crude appliances improvised out of rifles, tent-poles, boards, pieces of furniture, hurried as to a common centre from all points of the compass towards Plevna, their longed-for goal. Solitary men crawled along by themselves as best they could, leaving trails of blood behind. I noticed a Russian lieutenant who, after he had crept in this manner for a little space, sat down by the side of the track, leaning against the belly of a dead horse, and calmly awaited death in awful forsakenness. We passed him. He counted barely twenty summers. He looked at me, oh! so wistfully and sadly, with the sweet, divine light of deliverance shining in

his tearful eyes. He said faintly, 'De l'eau, monsieur.' I had some cold coffee left in my flask, which I got my companion to pour down his throat. He bowed his poor bruised head gratefully, and we left him to die.

Knots of scattered soldiers were everywhere; many lay down in the open fields among the dead, to snatch a few hours of sleep; others tried assiduously to find their troop in the general confusion. Whole companies, dead-beat, bivouacked on the spot where they had found themselves when the battle was over, many in defiance of orders. Groups of corpses, dead horses with their legs in the air, wounded horses moaning pitifully, demolished gun-carriages, broken-down carts, and other remnants marked the places where the shells had fallen. Bearers were still picking up wounded men left previously for dead. The ground was strewn with haversacks, shattered rifles, swords; was torn up by wheels and hoofs, by the tramp of thousands. Riderless horses, neighing vehemently, trotted about in small herds in search of food.

These sights were revealed to me by the peaceful, dying, golden light of a summer sunset. Even war, that hell-born product of the iniquity of monarchs and statesmen, receives its quota of sunshine. One would think the heavens would weep over such a scene.

Some civilians (Turks) were assisting the bearers. One of these, a stalwart, elderly man, dressed like a labourer, noticing that my companion, of small stature and exhausted, could hardly support me, offered to relieve him. The soldier returned to his company.

My good Samaritan had taken me as far as the first houses—it being dark by now and the cannonade having ceased—when I could bear the pain and the fatigue no longer. I declared to him that I could not proceed. He said:

'There is a small private ambulance from Sofia somewhere about here; it only arrived yesterday; let us find it.'

Many Turkish inhabitants were about, rejoicing in the

victory. These had behaved throughout with great patriotism. I was told that from the flat roofs of the southern houses, whence the desperate encounter between Skobelev and Yunuz Bey could be witnessed in close proximity, they had cheered the troops, although within easy bullet-range, and had supplied refreshments to them, not fearing to penetrate to the front line. They directed us, and we came to a small house, the door of which was, however, shut in our face by a coarse-looking Christian woman. The Turk uttered an oath. We went to the next house, which was the right one.

The Christians had been treated so leniently by Osman that they began to feel safe, and even allowed themselves to be insolent. Their presumption received a rude shock next morning, when all adult male Bulgarians were compelled to assist in the burial of the slain.

The ambulance had only just completed its installation in a small private house placed at its disposal by the patriotism of the occupier and his family, who retained only the kitchen and an outhouse.

One cart had already deposited its contents—four wounded. There was accommodation for seven more. These came within the next hour, and before midnight we had twenty patients.

The staff consisted of a surgeon, an assistant, two attendants, and a general servant.

My chin was examined and stitched up. The damage to the nose was trifling. I was stripped, put into a comfortable camp-bed: had beef-tea, rice, eggs, milk, and medicine to ease the pain, and was left to my devices when the next batch of maimed arrived. Most of these were amputation cases.

The continual rattling of cart wheels, the tramp of stragglers in search of a night's shelter, prevented me from going to sleep.

Many times I overheard a conversation outside which in English would run somewhat as follows:

‘Who is that?’

‘Cart with wounded, sir—six men—five Turks and a Russian.’

‘Full up; can’t take another case in.’

‘They all say that, sir. Am I to cart the poor fellows about all night?’

‘Can’t help it, my friend. We can’t do impossibilities.’

The door is closed, and off goes the grumbling driver, with his maimed and moaning freight, in search of an asylum.

Towards midnight I had more food. There were now two co-sufferers, Turks, in the small, low room, which had but little furniture, and looked bare and comfortless to Western notions. Both had had limbs amputated, and were sleeping off the effects of chloroform. Next day I noticed a heap of legs and arms in the back garden.

Soon I fell asleep, and did not awake until roused for breakfast.

The following is a general outline of what took place in this battle:—

As on July 20, the Russians, under General Krüdener, attacked from four sides: from the north, the north-east, the east, and the south.

In the extreme north there was some desultory fighting near Opanetz; but the Russian general (Loschkareff) had the foolishly premature idea of directing his attention to the Vid and our probable line of retreat; thus he withdrew his force from the general action, and served, finally, only as cover to the retiring columns.

The force coming from the north-east, under General Weljaminow, attacked the bulk of the left wing—among others my redoubt, without success. After the departure of my company the enemy possessed himself of the side-trenches, but was at length totally routed. I have it on the authority of at least a hundred eyewitnesses that the Russian retreat resolved itself into a flight of the wildest and most disorderly description. Even Russian writers admit this; Kuropatkin uses the characteristic phrase, ‘A non-orderly retreat.’

The force coming from the east, under General Prince Schachowskoy, attacked the main body of our right wing, conquered two redoubts, and pressed westward on Plevna, penetrating wedgewise between the two wings. After I had been wounded charges and counter-charges followed one another in quick succession. Towards sunset the Russians were defeated and the two redoubts retaken. Here also the enemy's retreat was no better than a flight, though not so bad as in the other wing.

In the south, General Skobelev, by far the most capable of the Russian leaders, not only held his own in and west of the Tultchenitza Valley and along the Krishin road; against the forces opposed to him under Yunuz Bey, but even gained some immaterial advantages. Reluctantly he obeyed the command directing a general retreat, which his column alone effected in tolerably good order.

Next morning some of the Russian batteries and a fresh regiment came back within shelling distance and reopened fire. The Mushir sent all the available cavalry, a light battery, and a battalion of infantry. There was a smart encounter; both sides received reinforcements. For a moment it looked as if the action would be renewed; but the Russians thought better of it, and resumed the retreat. Our detachment returned to camp. No pursuit took place; for, truly, the Turks were not in a condition to pursue.

Krüdener, the scapegoat, was deprived of his command after the war, and made to serve as adjutant to the military governor of Warsaw.

Of the Turkish force (20,000 men, fifty-seven guns) I have already given details. The Russians give their strength as thirty-six battalions and thirty squadrons—total, 40,000 men, with 176 guns.

The whole of the Turkish force had taken part in the action, except the battalion stationed near the Vid bridge. The Mushir had been repeatedly under fire. An entire Russian infantry regiment, quite fresh, arrived on the scene

when the battle was virtually over; this is not included in the above figures. It served to cover the retreat.

Many Turkish officers deplored the fact that the six battalions in occupation of Lovdcha had not come up to join in the action. Had they done so Skobelev would have been taken between two fires; and in the heat of a general and unsuccessful engagement the enemy would have found neither the time nor the troops to take possession of the town during the temporary absence of its garrison. The commander of Lovdcha, Rifa'at Pasha, either neglected Napoleon's maxim: 'Marchez au canon,' or acted on the Mushir's orders. Osman always attached particular importance to Lovdcha, for reasons of his own.

The losses on our side amounted to 2,000 killed and *hors de combat*, besides some thousands of minor accidents not necessitating sojourn in the ambulances.

Recent writers state the Russian losses at 7,500 killed and wounded; eyewitnesses, the newspapers, and earlier authors gave the figure as 10,000. Probably the truth lies between the two extremes.

We buried 1,000 Turks and 3,000 Russians. We had 1,000 wounded prisoners. The despatch to Sofia of those wounded who could be moved commenced on July 31.

The statements made by partisans, of Turkish soldiers killing the wounded, are fabrications. The wounded prisoners were treated in exactly the same manner as their Turkish brethren. Isolated instances of barbarism will happen in every war and among the most civilised troops (*vide* the horrible occurrences in Bazeilles during the battle of Sedan), but it is a lie to say that maltreatment of the wounded or prisoners was habitual, or even frequent, with the Turks. The officers had strict orders—always obeyed and enforced, as I know from experience—to check excesses and bring offenders to book.

The Turkish Army was in a state of terrible confusion after the battle, but by August 1 it had already completely reorgan-

ised itself. If we, the victors, were in such a condition, what must have been that of the vanquished?

On August 1 or 2 we received from Orkanyé a reinforcement of four battalions, of which two were sent to Lovdcha, increasing its garrison to eight battalions. We had thus thirty-five battalions in Plevna, or 25,000 men; for bodies of young recruits arrived, who were distributed among the companies which had suffered most. At this figure our force remained until the beginning of September.

On July 31 there was in Sistova among the Russian troops an indescribable panic. It is not my province to enter into the details of this strange occurrence; abler pens than mine have given a vivid picture of the extraordinary scenes enacted there (*vide* e.g. Thilo von Trotha); but I may be allowed to point out that this incident shows conclusively the Russian loss of *morale* after the two crushing defeats of July 20 and 30.

Russia was much in the condition of a man who had gone up to one lying on the ground, presuming him to be dying, with the intent of depriving him of some of his belongings, and had received from him two kicks so vigorous, well-directed, and painful as to remember them until the end of his days.

A similar thing happened at the commencement of the Crimean War: I refer to the unsuccessful siege of Silistria and the battle of Giurgevo.

Like the crash of doom there came to astounded Russia the sudden conviction (just as it did in 1854) that the 'Sick Man,' the despised, moribund Turk, had given the most unmistakable signs of the strongest possible vitality. The Russian headquarters retired from Tirnova to Bulgareni; Gourko was called back across the Balkans; East Roumelia was evacuated; the Czarevitch retreated behind the Lom; the active co-operation of Roumania, hitherto contemptuously declined, was now as greedily accepted; ten more divisions were ordered to be mobilised; the pretty and fanciful dream of a personally-conducted military pleasure-excursion to

Stamboul was rudely shattered; and for four and a half months the Russo-Turkish war turned upon this one momentous question: 'Will Plevna stand or fall?' For four and a half months one man, rising to the sublimest height to which manhood can ascend, proudly bade defiance to all the forces which Russia's inexhaustible resources and vindictive rage could hurl at him, succumbing only to starvation—an auxiliary invoked by the calculating genius of a Todleben, of Sebastopol fame, who succeeded by dint of patience where the impetuosity of a Gourko and a Skobelev had failed; where the halo of glory and victory which surrounds the family name of Hohenzollern had given the lie direct to its bearer, Charles of Roumania; where the Czar learnt, for the first time, that hordes and numbers count as nothing against the indomitable will of the individual.

The Grand Duke Nicholas, the Russian Commander-in-Chief, expressed the situation after the battle with unconscious terseness in his famous telegram to Prince Charles of Roumania: 'Come to our aid. Cross the Danube where you like, how you like, under what conditions you like, but come quickly to our aid. The Turks are annihilating us. The Christian cause is lost.'

Had Turkey in August commanded the services of a moderately far-seeing and determined man, in lieu of that sluggard, Mehemed Ali (who deserves the name of Cunctator without implying the redeeming qualities of the classic prototype), and had Suleiman shown a little more circumspection at the expense of his magnificent, useless bravery, the astounded world would have witnessed a second Sedan.

CHAPTER IX

AN INTERVAL OF INACTIVITY

JULY 31 TO SEPTEMBER 6, 1877

I STAYED in the ambulance for four or five days, dividing my time between smoking, eating and drinking, and sleeping. Talking was painful, owing to my wounded chin. I rose on the first day, hearing the distant cannonade, contrary to the surgeon's orders, and was summarily and rudely restored to my virtuous couch. On the third or fourth day, when I had grown stronger, I got up, and assisted the overworked attendants. My bedroom-mates had, for an hour or two, loudly and angrily lamented the loss of their limbs; but as the Turk has in a high degree the wonderful gift of adapting himself to circumstances—the outcome of the theory of fatality which is part of his religion—they were soon resigned and cheerful.

The food was good and plentiful; I grew quite fastidious. There were no Russians in the house. Eight men were sent to Sofia, much against their will; for we were very comfortable, and the cart journey presented no agreeable prospect. I had the option of going, but preferred to stay and rejoin my company after recovery. Our full complement of twelve cases remained in the house; with the single exception of mine, these were all grave ones. Two terminated fatally during my convalescence.

The wound in my chin was painful, particularly at meal-times, but healed unexpectedly well and rapidly. My chief complaint was weakness through loss of blood, but a fine

constitution and abundant strengthening food overcame this speedily.

At this stage of the campaign our hospital arrangements—that is, those of the voluntary and civil hospitals—were really good. Towards November they became abominable. The Government institutions were execrable.

The surgeon—a physician in good practice in Sofia, a Bulgarian by descent, but Mahomedan, and passionately devoted to the Turkish cause, a good linguist, and highly educated—had equipped, and was working, the ambulance at his own expense, supported by contributions from patriotic friends. He was skilful and clever, but rough in manner and taciturn. The assistant was a fledgeling in the medical profession, gentlemanly, with a *penchant* for Englishmen and British institutions; he spoke English, having ‘walked’ a London hospital. The attendants were good-natured and willing, but ignorant.

At a later date I paid the surgeon a trifle for my maintenance, in ‘scrip’ received in lieu of salary. I hope he has been able to turn the promissory notes of the Ottoman Government to some better account than the waste-paper basket or pipe-lights, which are about the level of their intrinsic value.

The assistant and the attendants kept us *au courant* of events. Nothing exceptional happened. No enemy was within fifteen miles of our positions. We heard of the panic in Sistova, and of the general retreat on all points of the Russian forces. The building of redoubts had recommenced with great vigour.

A corporal from my company called on the second or third day, whom Jack had sent as escort to a train of carts with picked-up rifles. He brought me a pencil note somewhat in this strain:—

‘Dear old fellow,—Am getting on well; bruised black and blue, and painful, but nothing to cry about. Hope to see you soon, restored, to lead us once again to victory. Hope the boss will have a long convalescence. Very busy assisting

another battalion (rank duffers) in building a fresh redoubt. Wasn't that a day! I had some sort of a company left when the fighting was over, but half of the men were strangers; twenty-four hours later stragglers were still coming in. I can now account for all the men save one, whom I have definitely reported as missing. Russia in a funk, according to latest news.—Yours, JACK.'

I gave the corporal part of my midday ration, and learnt details of my company's doings after I had been incapacitated.

I heard that our ferik, Adil Pasha, had his sabre broken by a blow from a rifle butt-end; that the Mushir had inspected the troops' positions on the night of the battle as late as eleven o'clock; that there was talk in camp of the Russians having offered an armistice.

Speaking from memory, I should estimate that my company had lost:—

Officers: killed, one (the first-lieutenant); wounded, two (the captain and myself); slightly wounded, one (Seymour). Men: killed, ten; wounded, twenty; minor accidents, twenty or twenty-five; missing, one.

Thus we were reduced to 120 combatants. During August we received twenty recruits; ten men recovered in the ambulances and rejoined us. Deducting five invalided through illness, we had 145 in the September battle. There were no deserters until November; then we had two.

We had some old newspapers supplied to us; several Turkish, one English, one French. The latter came, I believe, from a sympathetic British source. Needless to say I devoured their contents, however stale. The Turkish journals I handed over to my fellow-patients, who were disgusted with the meaningless, bombastic rubbish they contained. I had received no letters since leaving Widdin. The postal arrangements were beneath criticism.

On the last day of my stay the assistant procured me a Turkish woman's garments (for want of tolerably clean male clothes, so he said, but I think he did it by way of a joke); these I donned in order to wash my own clothes, which were stiff

with blood, in the back garden. It must have been a sight for the gods, with my face closed for repairs! A Turkish maiden—young, handsome, and winning, to judge from eyes, movements, shape, voice, talk, and her lovely bare arms—assisted me, with an old, shaking, grandfatherly man as a sort of male duenna. She took good care to inform me that he was deaf. I learnt the conjugation of the verb ‘sevmek’ (to love) in all its innumerable derived forms (except the negative one), moods, and tenses. When the old gentleman had the complaisance to fall asleep in the sun, I ascertained that in Turkish the phrase, ‘We shall be able to kiss one another,’ can be expressed in a single word. To discover this the veil had to be removed, and reality did not belie surmise. When we had arrived at this stage of our studies the assistant called out to me in English that the surgeon and the girl’s father (the owner of the house) were coming up the street together. The girl, on my translating this, said—also by means of a single word—‘You will be unable to make me love you,’ and flew indoors like a frightened gazelle. I returned to my washing-tub. The old gentleman awoke with a start. I told him that I had sent the girl away, as she was idle and useless. He shuffled indoors on his palsied legs, muttering: ‘All women are’; and thus a word of wisdom and eighty years’ experience terminated an episode of romance in the grim reality of warfare.

When my clothes had dried before the kitchen-fire, and the rents and holes had been mended by the maiden’s nimble fingers, I dressed, and took leave of my various friends. Acting on instructions received from the surgeon, I presented myself at the Arsenal, established in a mosque, and received a sabre and a revolver, mine having been lost; also a fresh tunic and a pair of trousers, which I made up into a bundle. There seemed to be an abundance of everything. Then I called upon my captain, who was in the ambulance of which I had been an inmate on the first occasion. Here also they had their full complement of patients—sixty, having had eighty on the night of the battle.

The captain was weak and depressed, although the wound in the shoulder was healing as well as could be expected. Some splinters of bone had been removed. I had a long conversation with him, but refrained from transmitting Jack's pious wish. He was going to Sofia on the following day.

On my way to camp I was fortunate enough to be overtaken by a train of packhorses. I rode on one, sitting on the packages sideways. In this dignified attitude I reached the redoubt, where I was hailed with every token of sincere joy. Needless to say, Jack was delighted. I reported myself to the major, and resumed command of the company.

For three weeks we lived in a state of *dolce far niente*, the daily routine of muster, inspection, and outposts excepted. Our vigilance was not relaxed, but might have been so without any appreciable difference; for the Russians made no attempt to surprise us, or even approach our positions. Strict supervision was exercised over the condition of the arms.

We had glorious weather. In our domestic arrangements we were as comfortable as men living in a redoubt can be. The health of the troops was, on the whole, satisfactory; once the surgeons ran out of quinine, and as there were a few fever cases, some anxiety was felt; but they made a concoction of the bark of a native tree do duty (every man a dose a day) until a supply arrived. Food was good and plentiful; there was a large store of almost every necessary in town. The supply of many minor articles, such as soap, candles, matches, salt, sugar, was irregular, and not to be relied upon; but Jack and I had foreseen this, and taken in a goodly stock of these commodities in Plevna previous to the battle. Coffee does not form part of the rations of the Turkish soldier, although on three or four days in the week this beloved luxury was dealt out as an extra, occasionally to everybody, mostly to the officers only; by dint of economising we managed to have at least one cup daily.

We were kept informed of all that was going on in the

world. The Russian retreat on all points caused immense satisfaction in camp, though the new offensive alliance with the Roumanians and, later, their passage of the Danube, was a source of anxiety to the better-educated officers.⁷⁵

'Prince Charles is a Prussian,' said some, 'and one German general is worth a dozen Russian divisions.'

Among those Turkish officers who had risen from the ranks were many ignorant men; I knew several who could neither read nor write, incredible as this may seem, whose hardiness and courage were admirable. These laughed at Prince Charles's zeal, and compared him to a child with a new toy, the toy being the young Roumanian Army; they placed him on a level with Milan of Servia. I need hardly say that there never was a worse-matched pair; for the former is a brave soldier and an honourable man.

The Mushir must have been in almost hourly communication with Constantinople, to judge from the way in which he was informed of all that was going on outside. At that time our telegraph to Orkanyé and Sofia was still intact. There was a daily meeting of the superior officers at headquarters. The news obtained by these was disseminated in camp.

In the beginning of August a letter addressed by the Sultan to Osman was read by the ferik during parade. His Majesty, speaking in the name of the Ottoman nation, thanked the Mushir and his gallant little army for the double victory, and forwarded him a costly present, a sword studded with diamonds. We cheered lustily. Far better had the Padishah sent a sum of money. It is astonishing with what forbearance the Turkish officer will overlook the constant non-payment of his salary.

The list of promotions was read out, and I had the gratification of hearing myself mentioned as *mulazim evvel*. The rise carried with it the magnificent increase of pay of 50 piastres (9s.) a month. They might as well have quintupled my pay, for all the difference it made in my finances.

Many additional redoubts were built during August. I

shall give a detailed list of the Turkish positions when dealing with the September battle. Telegraph-lines were laid down by the engineers connecting headquarters with the redoubts near Bukova and Opanetz, with the Bash Tabiyas, and with the Krishin redoubts.

An infectious desire, which never relaxed till Plevna fell, seized the soldiers to dig themselves in like moles. Apart from the great redoubts occupied by battalions and batteries, with their systems of front and flank trenches, there were minor entrenchments innumerable for outposts and sentries; sheltered ways connecting the redoubts with each other; for the reserves and stores, protected encampments and magazines in the rear. Many of these minor fortifications were erected by company leaders, and sometimes by non-commissioned officers, on their own initiative. I, personally, caused to be erected, on my own responsibility, several small works, none of which were originally marked in the plans.

This furious, quite spontaneous, and constantly growing desire of the soldiers to dig themselves deeper and deeper into the ground, without pressure being exercised by the commanders, struck me as being a remarkable feature.

About August 15 I was summoned to the ferik, who asked me if I could speak French sufficiently to act as a *parlementaire* to the Russian camp. I replied, truthfully, in the affirmative. A letter was given to me addressed to the commander of the Russian army east of Plevna. I was bidden to read it before its envelope was closed. It dealt, firstly, with diplomatic complications arising from the capture by the Russians of some English and German medical men in the Turkish service, whose unconditional return to the Turkish camp the Mushir demanded as a matter of justice, equity, and international courtesy, whilst the Russians treated these gentlemen as prisoners-of-war; secondly, with the question: Is the Red Crescent, the Ottoman equivalent of the Red Cross, protected under the Geneva Convention like its Christian prototype? ⁷⁶

Full verbal instructions were given to me. I showed to the ferik the letter which I had written at the Russian prisoner's dictation, and asked for permission to deliver it, which was granted.

I made myself look smart in my new tunic and trousers. I cleaned my sabre and my boots till they shone like mirrors. I flatter myself that my tanned, smooth, youthful face showed to advantage below the bright red fez with its jaunty tassel. The nose was again open to public view, but the chin was still under repair. Far from thinking my patched-up face a disfigurement, I was mightily proud of it.

New tunics and trousers had been dealt out to my company, but no boots. Throughout the campaign the footgear supply was grossly neglected, whilst everything else was plentiful.

At the appointed time (11 A.M.) I met my escort, consisting of a corporal and a bugler from the regular cavalry, the former carrying a white flag attached to a lance taken from a dead Cossack. The Turkish cavalry had no lances. The men seemed to have been selected with a view to impress the enemy by their personal appearance: they were handsome, strapping fellows, glowing with robust health, in the highest of spirits. Their apparel and equipment were all that the most critical eye could desire. The horses were the pick of the squadron. Generally speaking, the Turkish cavalry was badly mounted, the supply of horses being one of the sorest points in the administration of the Ottoman Army. They brought a horse for my use, a handsome but vicious brute, which I exchanged for the corporal's, as I was not an accomplished rider.

We left camp by the Bulgareni road eastward. I had to show to the outpost near Grivitzá the Mushir's written authority; a Circassian officer accompanied us thence as far as the most advanced sentry; there I destroyed the paper. We followed the rather monotonous, deserted road at a sharp trot. It was glorious weather; a light shower had

fallen during the night, laying the dust and cooling the atmosphere.

After a ride of six miles we came in sight of a detachment of Cossacks and dragoons, to whom we displayed our flag. A young lieutenant of the latter, a handsome, gentlemanly fellow, rode up to us, waving his handkerchief. I advanced to meet him, and we saluted each other courteously. I stated my business in French, which language was understood by him. He consulted his brother-officers, and finally asked me to dismount and await instructions. The Russians crowded round us, the Cossacks being curious and not unfriendly, the dragoons polite and obliging. Our horses were fed and watered. We sat down on the bank of the road; I exchanged cigarettes with the Russian officers and took a pull at their brandy flask; my men had bread and water. In the meantime a few horsemen had left us at a gallop, eastward, along the road. I talked of all things imaginable, save the war, with the dragoon lieutenant; the Cossack officers did not speak French. In half an hour the horsemen returned, and I was bidden to mount. My eyes were bandaged, the horse being led. After a sharp trot of twenty minutes we halted, the handkerchief was taken off, and I found myself in what looked like the bivouac of an advance-guard of three battalions and a few squadrons, with a Cossack battery. I made a mental note of position and scenery. When I had dismounted a general came up, who saluted me courteously, and stated that the commander was not within ten miles, but that if I would hand him my letter he would pledge me his word to deliver it personally into the hands of the chief, and that an answer would be sent within twenty-four hours. I gave him my letter, and also that written for the Russian prisoner, which he undertook to forward, thanking me warmly for the interest taken in his unhappy countryman. Our conversation ended, and he handed me over to an infantry colonel, with instructions to attend to my bodily wants. The latter took me into a small tent, where we were joined by other officers. We had

a cosy meal, consisting of wine, bread, and soup made of cabbage and onions, and a pleasant chat upon the weather, the country, and things in general. No attempt was made to draw me. Even then, a fortnight after the battle, the Russians were still lost in admiration of the devilish bravery with which the Turks had defended their positions. 'Vos hommes, mon camarade,' said the colonel; 'sont des diables; jamais je n'ai vu pareille chose.'

After half an hour's exchange of civilities I quitted my hospitable and courteous enemies, mounted, was blindfolded, and led back to my comrades. Here I bade farewell to the dragoon lieutenant (who, as I learnt, had meanwhile behaved kindly to my men), saluted the Cossack officers, and off we went at a sharp trot. Arrived in camp, I reported myself to the ferik and gave an account of what I had seen. Next day—so I heard—a Russian *parlementaire* arrived at Grivitza with an answer; but what it contained I have not learnt.

Our camp-life went through its monotonous daily round; up to August 31 neither gun nor rifle shot was fired within my hearing. We were told of Suleiman's brave though hitherto unsuccessful attempts upon the Shipka Pass, and were daily waiting with anxiety for information of a decisive offensive movement on Mehemed Ali's part, and for orders to advance, and beard the Russians in their own dens. We managed to have plenty of fun—games, wrestling and fencing matches, chess, dominoes, improvised concerts, *al fresco* dances, and even theatricals. Turkish men do not dance as a rule, so this amusement was confined to us few Europeans, and to those officers who had been in the Occident and had learnt Western customs. Jack and I were always the ladies, and our ball costumes, consisting of garments 'borrowed' in town and cut extravagantly low in the neck, with long trains improvised out of sacking; our huge bouquets of straw, corn-cobs, and cabbage-leaves; our enormous fans made of ox-hide; our curtseys, smirks, pretended flirtations, and kisses like rifle-discharges, made the onlookers laugh so much that many begged us to desist, with tears in their eyes. Occasionally

Jack donned a Bulgarian girl's complete costume, and some farce he enacted with our *kiatib* (clerk), the apothecary of another battalion, and a corpulent German doctor from Plevna dressed up as a mother-in-law all in grey sacking, made us fairly shriek; I do not think I ever laughed so much in my life. But orders came down to stop this game, as it tended to undermine the officers' authority; and, to our regret, the 'Theatre Royal, Janik Bair Redoubt,' was closed.

Our chief trouble was the increasing scarcity of tobacco. Occasional doles were dealt out to the officers, but not enough for our appetite. There was not an ounce left in Plevna: we had 'borrowed' the town bare. Fancy my surprise when Bakal, having asked for six hours' leave one morning, came back in the afternoon with three pounds of Servian tobacco. Heaven only knows where he had obtained it; it was not to my interest to ask.

I must give a brief account of the minor actions which took place between the second and third battles of Plevna, in none of which my battalion had a share, rather to our regret, for we grew tired of idleness.

On August 6 a Russian detachment under Skobelev attacked Lovdcha. The Mushir sent five battalions, 200 Circassians, and three guns, under Emin Pasha, to the aid of Rifa'at Pasha, who had, however, beaten back the enemy before the reinforcement arrived. The Russians left 300 corpses behind, and must, therefore, have had 1,000 casualties. The Turkish losses were under 100. Emin returned to Plevna with his force, and exchanged a few shots with the enemy on the way.

By the end of August the Russian West Army occupied a semicircular position, the arc being open to the west, with a radius of seven miles, Plevna forming the centre. The northern extremity of the arc rested on Ribina, the southern on Bogot. The force consisted of two corps (the Fourth under General Krylow, the Ninth under General Krüdener) and a cavalry division, General Sotow being the commander. To this were added early in September several Russian

detachments and three Roumanian divisions, and Prince Charles became nominally the commander, Sotow being his chief-of-staff.

On August 30 the Mushir organised an offensive movement on a grand scale towards Pelishat. The operating force consisted of nineteen battalions, three batteries, seven squadrons of regulars, two squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks, ten squadrons of Saloniki horsemen,⁷⁷ and 300 Circassians, under Osman's personal orders, with Hassan Sabri Pasha—now promoted to ferik rank—as second-in-command. To protect the Plevna camp there remained behind sixteen battalions (among them mine), six and a half batteries, and the rest of the Circassians, under Adil Pasha.*

The dispositions for the undertaking were kept secret: it was not until a few hours before the actual start that it became known in camp that something was in contemplation. The column left camp at dusk on the 30th, bivouacked on and near the Pelishat road, two miles east of Plevna, and started at daybreak on August 31. Some hours afterwards we heard the growl of cannon in the south-east. We were anxious and excited. The suspense became worse when Adil Pasha despatched, during the afternoon, three battalions, and 100 packhorses with ammunition, as a reinforcement for the Mushir; almost unbearable when a Russian detachment appeared east of Grivitza, and Adil sent hurriedly four battalions (among them mine) to protect the Bash Tabiyas. But the Russians had retired before we arrived, having been received by shells, and we returned to our redoubt.

In the evening it was made known that the column was returning after having done what it was supposed to do, viz. clear up the uncertainty as to the Russian position. We officers, however, could not help looking upon the action as a failure, although we kept our opinion concealed from the men, in order not to dishearten them.

Late at night the column returned, having suffered a loss of 300 killed and 1,000 wounded; the latter were brought

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

back. The Russians state their losses at 1,000. Our troops had a Russian gun as trophy. The fighting had been extremely severe ; one Russian redoubt had changed hands four times.

I cannot say whether the Mushir intended to have broken through the hostile lines, or whether this was really—as was pretended—a mere reconnoitring movement. If the former, the battle of Pelishat was a failure for the Turkish arms ; if the latter, a success, because the desired object was gained. The strength of the column speaks against the latter assumption. That the Turks were not actually defeated is apparent from the perfect order in which the column returned, and from the absence of any pursuit.

Kuropatkin says, in substance : Had Sotow foreseen the enemy's intention, had he utilised his reserves, and had the reinforcements arrived in time, instead of resting on the way, the battle of Pelishat would have been a victory for the Russians.^{7*}

On the same day (August 31) commenced the Mahomedan month of fasting and festivals, Ramazan. There were some religious ceremonies, a great deal of spouting and speechifying by the priests attached to the camp, a lot of jollification, and precious little fasting. I was in town next day, on business connected with the supply of new clothing, and attended a festival in a mosque, part of which was utilised as storehouse. There were no invalids in the ambulances, save those of yesterday's action ; all those that had not recovered had been sent to Sofia. Plevna had regained much of its equanimity : shops were open, trade was almost brisk, municipal government and administration of justice were carried on as usual. The Turks felt themselves safe and happy, sheltered, as it were, under Osman's strong wings ; the Bulgarians were not molested as long as they conformed to the rules laid down by the authorities. No inhabitant was allowed to pass beyond our lines. The post was at work again, after a fashion, and I had early in September a letter from home. I wrote every week.

On this day (September 1), the wind coming from the south, we heard guns at Lovdcha. Soon it became known in camp that Rifa'at was engaged, and that the wire had been cut.

On the 2nd a column was formed, near Krishin, of twenty battalions, three batteries, and two squadrons. My battalion was again left behind. Sounds of shelling at Lovdcha continued all day.

On the 3rd, at midday, the column started, under the Mushir's personal command. It consisted of three brigades of six battalions each, commanded by Hassan Sabri Pasha, Emin Pasha, and Tahir Pasha, with a reserve of two battalions. Ahmed Pasha, the commander of artillery, Tewfik Bey, and the whole of the Staff, were with the Mushir. Adil became again temporary chief in Plevna, with fifteen battalions, six and a half batteries, and seventeen squadrons. All day long there was a furious cannonade in the south, for a short time also in close proximity; for the column was fighting on the way.

September 4.—Bad news and long faces: Lovdcha taken, the Lovdcha-Plevna road occupied, communication interrupted. Grave anxiety as to the Mushir's fate. Orders from Adil to be ready to start at a moment's notice. During the afternoon the Roumanians appeared north-east of our positions and made a demonstration against the Bash Tabiyas, but were easily driven off. My battalion, called upon to defend two large redoubts in the absence of the four other battalions, was in position and ready for the fray for many hours, but had no actual fighting to do. We shelled the Roumanians, and the cavalry was sent forward by Adil; but the enemy had already disappeared. One of the worst days I have ever spent.

September 5.—Circassians sent by Osman, and arriving by a circuitous route, bring news that column is safe and is returning by a western road. Fugitives from Lovdcha arrive.

September 6.—Column returns to camp in the morning. We mourn for half an hour over the loss of Lovdcha, and

then, soldier-like, regain our equanimity and our spirits. Remnants of the Lovdcha garrison enter camp by various routes in small bodies. Rain sets in.

What had happened was this : Lovdcha was defended by eight battalions, six guns, and some Circassians, under Rifa'at Pasha. On September 1 the Russians had appeared in strong numbers, cut the wires, and shelled the fortifications which the troops had erected. On the following day the cannonade was renewed. Rifa'at saw himself compelled to evacuate one hill and send to Plevna for aid. Next day (September 3) the Russians, under the nominal command of General Prince Imeretinski, led really by Skobeleff, with twenty-five battalions, ninety-two guns, and fifteen squadrons, attacked vigorously, and were, of course, successful, considering their enormous numerical superiority. The Turks fairly excelled themselves that day in obstinate defensive bravery—even the Russian writers admit this—and Rifa'at Pasha deserves special mention as the Defender of Lovdcha. The fight lasted twelve hours. Unhappily, the Mushir's column arrived too late. The garrison of Lovdcha, or what remained of it, dispersed in the neighbouring mountainous country; most of the men arrived in Plevna camp during the following days. Rifa'at saved five guns out of his six; these and a few scratch companies he took with him on the road to Mikré; but next day the detachment turned back, and proceeded by a circuitous route to Plevna, which it reached on the 6th.

The battle of Lovdcha cost the Turks 2,500 killed, wounded, and missing; the Russians give their losses at 1,600. 22,000 Russians with ninety-two guns defeated 5,000 Turks with six guns, and yet Kuropatkin calls this action 'glorious'!

Prince Imeretinski (so I read in Trotha) stated in his official report that 2,200 Turks were killed in Lovdcha, and 3,000 during the pursuit. Bravo, Prince Ananias!—out of 5,000 men, 5,200 were killed!

In one redoubt the Russians killed all the helpless wounded whom the Turks had been compelled to leave

behind. The Christian inhabitants of Lovdcha outraged and massacred numbers of the Turkish residents, men, women, and children alike. The Russians looked on, or plundered Bulgarian and Turkish houses with praiseworthy impartiality.⁷⁹

The Mushir's column had proceeded on the 3rd by the high-road to Lovdcha, had seen Russian troops and a few protected batteries on the left, parallel with and facing the road, and had exchanged shots with them. The force took at dusk a quarter-circle position, the arc subtending on Lovdcha, the extreme left on the Lovdcha-Plevna road, three miles north of Lovdcha, the extreme right five miles due west of the town. A flying detachment was sent to Mikré, fourteen miles south-west of Lovdcha, to cover Teteven and Etropol; Troyan stood or fell with Lovdcha. In this position the troops bivouacked, full of anxiety; for Lovdcha was silent—an ominous sign. Next morning cavalry scouts discovered the town to be in Russian hands. The Mushir assembled the officers, and placed this question before them: 'Shall we attack or not?' The matter was carefully considered, and the answer was in the negative.⁸⁰ The return by the high-road was dangerous—owing to the Russian batteries on the western flank—if not impossible: for probably the Russians had meanwhile occupied the road (which, indeed, they had); so the column took, early on the 5th, the road, or rather path, *viâ* Novoselo, Silkova, Laskar, Baliéva, and thus to Krishin; during the journey many fugitives from Lovdcha were picked up. Between Krishin and Ternina the troops bivouacked, and early on the 6th they entered Plevna.

It is easy to be wise after the event, and it would be cheap criticism to say that the Mushir should have despatched the expeditionary force twenty-four hours earlier. But comment may be permissible on this point: 'Should the force have fought?' In my humble opinion it would have been better to attack, even without much chance of success, for this reason: The troops had been despatched for

a single specified purpose, known and intelligible to all, and approved of by everybody, namely, to protect Lovdcha. They found the town in the enemy's hands, and returned without having struck a blow. This would tend to compromise gravely the *morale* of the army. Cruel as it may seem, it would have been better to sacrifice a few hundred men, and raise the spirits of twenty battalions by the proud consciousness of having done, or in any case attempted to do, that which they were sent to do.

On September 5 or 6 we received a reinforcement of eight battalions and two batteries from Orkanyé; the fugitives from Lovdcha were re-formed into three battalions. Our strength during the third battle of Plevna was, therefore, forty-six battalions, nineteen squadrons,⁸¹ 500 Circassians, twelve batteries; or, 30,000 men with seventy-two guns. At this figure (less casualties) our force remained until the arrival of the column from Orkanyé on September 24.

September 6 is the last date with which I shall deal in this chapter, as on the 7th commenced the cannonade which ushered in the greatest battle of the war, one which in bloodshed and horrors has only been exceeded, since the Napoleonic campaigns, by Solferino, Koeniggrätz, and Gravelotte. It is necessary at this point to summarise once more the general operations. I shall take as starting-point the positions on July 12, as given in Chapter IV., and as termination, September 6.

Firstly, as regards affairs in Europe.

The Czarevitch's army formed the left wing, General Gourko's (later General Radetzki's) army the centre, and General Sotow's (later Prince Charles's) west army the right wing, of the Russian forces; in addition, there was in the extreme left an isolated corps in the Dobrudcha, under General Zimmermann. The latter did nothing.

The Czarevitch gave up, after the second battle of Plevna, the planned and already commenced investment of Rustchuk, and retreated to the Black Lom. A division of his was beaten at Ayaslar, August 22 and 23. Mehemed Ali Pasha

advanced with his army, carefully reorganised by him, and beat the Russians on August 30 at Kara Hassankiui (Kadi-kiui), and on September 5 at Kazelyevo. By the 6th the right bank of the Black Lom and part of the left bank were in Turkish hands. The Russians retreated to Biéla and the Yantra line.

Gourko, after having invaded East Roumelia, found himself suddenly confronted by Suleiman Pasha; was beaten by him on July 31 at Eski Zagra, retreated to Kazanlik, and evacuated this, August 6, for the Shipka Pass. General Radetzki took the command, and Gourko was called to the western army. Suleiman's unsuccessful assault on the Shipka Pass, August 21 to 26, is so famous that it need but be mentioned; the Turkish losses were 17,000 out of 30,000.

The western army was joined in the beginning of September by the three Roumanian divisions and by the detachments of Generals Imeretinski and Skobelev, disengaged after the taking of Lovdcha, and its position on September 5 was that given above, viz. the semicircle from Ribina to Bogot. On the 6th the army commenced its march of concentration on Plevna.

The Russian headquarters had been withdrawn to Bulgareni after the second battle, the Czar's quarters to Gorna Studen, near Sistova.

Secondly, as regards affairs in Asia.

General Oklobchio's corps formed the right wing, General Loris Melikoff's corps (the united detachments of Generals Devel and Heiman) the centre, and General Tergukasoff's corps the right wing, of the Russian forces.

General Oklobchio was unsuccessfully attacked in his fortified position at Mukha Estatu by Dervish Pasha, who had come from Batum, on August 13 and 24; otherwise there was no event of importance and no change in the situation.

Loris Melikoff's force was in and near Kurukdara; opposed to it was Moukhtar Pasha, in a happily chosen and strongly fortified position on the Aladja Dagh, commanding the routes to Kars. On August 25 a bloody and undecided

battle was fought at Kizil Tepé. By September 7 the hostile forces lay inactive, opposite to each other, in the old positions.

General Tergukasoff, in a good position at Chalfali, resisted Ismael Pasha's repeated attempts to penetrate from Bayazid to Erivan.

Thirdly, as regards affairs on the Black Sea shores.

Up to August 23 nothing was done; then General Alchasoff compelled the Turks to give up their position on the Gudauti River, and on August 31 they evacuated Sukhum Kalé. With this the operations on the coast terminated, whilst the insurrection in Abchasia, Kutais, and Kuban spread, and gave much trouble to two Russian divisions. The Ottoman fleet did nothing save disquieting the inhabitants of Odessa and other towns by useless demonstrations.

The general idea which we in the Plevna camp inferred from the various reports that came to our ears was this:—

Mehemed Ali had so far been successful on the Lom, and something grand and decisive was now expected of him. Suleiman had done his level best to reconquer the Shipka Pass, and had not been fortunate; but we knew that he would try and try again until he did succeed. In Asia the hostile forces were lying opposite one another; a big battle (Kizil Tepé) had remained undecided; several minor affairs had done neither harm nor good; the Russians were on the defensive along, and a little in advance of, the frontier line; the Turks had assumed the offensive without success. The performances of the fleet were a blank, and the English leader, on whom so much hope had been centred, was a bitter disappointment.

On September 6 an order of the Mushir was read out saying that the Russians were approaching with strong forces from all sides save the west, and that he expected to be attacked by vastly superior numbers on the morrow, but that he felt no uneasiness, being convinced that the troops, with God's help, would repeat their splendid performances

of the previous battles, and would justify the reputation of the Plevna army as victors in the eyes of the country and the world. We made our preparations for battle, were inspected by the ferik, offered up prayers to the Lord of war, and lay down fully dressed, arms in hand—that is, those of us who had no duties to do. I was up all night, visited twice the outposts and the sentries which my company had to furnish, and accompanied Major Taki and Adil's aide-de-camp on a tour of inspection.

The wind was high, and blew from the west, so that no sounds of the approaching enemy reached us. The weather, which had been splendid up to the 5th, had suddenly changed: it had turned chilly, the sky was overcast, and ominous clouds were chased swiftly by the growing gale. The night was very dark. That vague, indescribable feeling of awe and terror which precedes disaster crept repeatedly over me; I had to make strenuous efforts to shake it off and face boldly the inevitable, possibly death, that lay as yet hidden in the gruesome darkness, into which not a star, not a cottage window, not a spark of light of any kind, thrust a ray of brightness. The wind moaned dismally, and my excited fancy construed its rise and fall into the shrieks and groans of men in mortal agony. Time was in labour with a great event, and there issued forth from her womb a slaughter at which hell must have stood aghast.

When, in the ugly, misty grey dawn of a wet and boisterous day, I parted from the major, he had the goodness to say that there was no company in our redoubt led better than that of which I was the temporary commander. I read a few Bible verses, kissed my mother's signature, and lay down to snatch an hour of rest.

The Plevna army consisted on September 6 of 3 divisions, each of 12 battalions, with a general reserve of 10 battalions.* The First Division had 4, the Second 3, the Third 2 batteries; 3 batteries were in reserve. Early on the 7th 2 battalions from the Third Division were transferred to the

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

First ; so that the latter Division counted 14, the Second 12, and the Third 10 battalions.

The First Division, under Adil Pasha, formed the left wing, *i.e.* the north front and the eastern point.

The Second Division, under Hassan Şabri Pasha, formed the centre, *i.e.* the south-east front.

The Third Division, under Tahir Pasha, formed the right wing, *i.e.* the extreme southern flank.

The Reserve, under Rifa'at Pasha, occupied the headquarters hill, the town of Plevna, and the Vid bridge.

Our position was triangular in form, as in the battle of July 30, the extreme eastern point of the apex being in the Bash Tabiyas, the northern point of the base in Opanetz, the southern in Krishin ;⁸² Plevna formed the centre of the base. The dimensions of the camp had not been extended since July 30, except in the south, towards Krishin ; they were : north to south (Opanetz to Krishin), six and a half miles ; west to east (Vid bridge to Bash Tabiyas), seven miles. Our lines included an area of twenty square miles, and had a total length (exclusive of the non-occupied west flank) of sixteen miles.

List of the Fortifications of the Camp of Plevna on September 6, 1877, with the Names given to them by the Turkish Troops, or those by which they are called in this volume :—

Extreme north : 3 redoubts near Opanetz, north-east and east of the village, and facing to all four sides (Opanetz redoubts).

North front : 2 redoubts near Bukova, south of and facing the village (Bukova redoubts). Two large redoubts facing north, on the summit and northern slope of the Janik Bair, connected by a system of ditches serving the double purpose of rifle-trenches and protected ways ; these ditches were prolonged eastward as far as the Bukova redoubts, and westward as far as the Bash Tabiyas, so that from Bukova to the Bash

Tabiyas (four miles) there was an uninterrupted line of fortifications ⁸³ (Janik Bair redoubts, west and east).

Extreme east : 2 square-shaped redoubts, 300 yards apart (Bash Tabiyas north and south, or Bash Tabiya the northern, and Kanli Tabiya the southern).⁸⁴

South-east front : 5 large redoubts, facing east and south, on the southern slope of the hill south of the Bulgareni road and east of headquarters hill (Atouf Tabiya, Araba Tabiya, Omer Tabiya, Ibrahim Tabiya, Chorum Tabiya).

Extreme south : east of the Tultchenitza, one large redoubt, facing south (Tahir Tabiya) ; west of the Tultchenitza, 2 square-shaped redoubts on the southern margin of Plevna (Issa Tabiya and Kavanlik Tabiya) ; 4 square-shaped redoubts between Plevna and Krishin (Yunuz Tabiya, Talahat Tabiya, Milas Tabiya, Baghlarbashi Tabiya).⁸⁵

Extreme west : redoubt protecting the Vid bridge.

Interior of camp : a large redoubt on the eastern slope of headquarters hill, facing east (Ikhtihat Tabiya).*

List of Superior Officers attached to the Plevna Army from September 1 to September 24, i.e. to the Arrival of Ahmed Hifzi's Column :—

Marshal : Osman Pasha.

Generals of Division : Adil Pasha, Hassan Sabri Pasha (disabled September 11).

Generals of Brigade : Tahir Pasha (Chief-of-Staff), Kara Ali Pasha (disabled September 11), Atouf Pasha, Sadik Pasha, Rifa'at Pasha (disabled September 11), Ahmed Pasha (Commander of Artillery), Edhem Pasha (arrived from Orkanyé early in September), Emin Pasha (disabled September 11).

Colonels : Tewfik Bey (promoted after the battle), Yunuz Bey, Hassib Bey (Surgeon-in-Chief), Osman Bey (Commander of Cavalry), Hamdi Bey, Said Bey, Omer Bey, Hairi Bey, Suleiman Bey, Hafouz Bey.

* For detailed list of Fortifications, see Appendix.

Lieutenant-Colonels: Talahat Bey (Aide-de-camp), Mehemed Bey, Mehemed Nazif Bey, Ibrahim Bey (killed September 10), Raif Bey, Abdullah Bey, Riza Bey (disabled September 11), Ali Riza Bey (killed September 11).

My battalion was in the Janik Bair redoubt west, with two other battalions and a battery. Our colonel, the ferik, and the latter's staff, were with us; 300 yards in rear of the redoubt, on the southern slope of the Janik Bair, and in the shelter of the dead-angle formed by the crest, were the encampments of our redoubt reserves and of the two squadrons which belonged to our division, and our stores.

Of the twenty companies (8, 8, 4) which formed the garrison of the redoubt, eight (one battalion) occupied the front and flank trenches, four (half a battalion) the ditches connecting us with the redoubt in the east, and four (my battalion) the redoubt itself; whilst four (half a battalion) were as reserve in the rear, with the cavalry. The connection with the Bukova redoubts was maintained by companies, detached from the garrison of the latter.

The constitution of my company had recently been modified. The first squad (late Lieutenant Hardar's) had been placed under Lieutenant Tereb; Sergeant Bakal led the second (my) squad; the third was under Lieutenant Seymour, as before; whilst the colour squad was officered by Lieutenant Murad Azif, who had arrived from Adrianople with a detachment of recruits in August. He was an alaili (having lately been promoted to mulazim zani rank), thirty years old, conscientious, painstaking, and reliable, but not brilliant. His habits were vulgar, but I liked him for his disinterestedness: in spite of the difference of age, he obeyed promptly and cheerfully, and never questioned my authority or assumed any airs. He came from the neighbourhood of Adrianople; his father was a captain of Zaptiés (Gendarmes), and was then serving in Suleiman Pasha's army.

The principal features of our arrangements for the battle were as follows: We had 600 cartridges per man, and for the artillery 100 shells per gun, eight days' biscuits, a

quantity of maize for porridge, bread, rice, some fruit, forage, and a few head of cattle per battalion, housed partly in our store-chambers in the redoubt, partly in mud-built magazines in the rear. Each man carried eighty cartridges; boxes with 1,000 cartridges stood in convenient positions in the trenches and the redoubt. There were two or three carts per battalion for removing the wounded, and a first-aid ambulance on the southern slope of the Janik Bair. The ox-carts, the packhorses, and the artillery waggons stood ready for saving the ammunition and stores. A regular ordnance service by Circassians placed us in hourly communication with Opanetz, Bukova, the Bash Tabiyas, headquarters, and Plevna; a cavalry officer organised and superintended this, acting thus, as it were, as postmaster. From Bash Tabiya north the wire connected us with headquarters. In both Janik Bair redoubts there was a pole, with ladder attached; these had been erected originally for the priests to mount when singing out the morning and evening prayers, but were used during the engagement as observatories. From our redoubt headquarters hill was visible (distance two miles), and a code of signals had been arranged. An officer equipped with a telescope had been detached for this work. In Bash Tabiya there was a skilled telegraphist with several assistants. The officers, down to the company leaders, had received note-books and pencils. All watches had been regulated to a uniform time, sunset being always twelve o'clock.⁸⁶ Plans of the camp had been dealt out. At regular intervals casks with drinking-water, tubs with biscuits, and boxes with salt had been placed in the redoubt and the trenches, and men were appointed to refill these at stated times. Cooking-parties were organised and arrangements made to supply hot meals to the fighting-lines. For the hours of darkness each company was divided, so that one-third was on duty whilst two-thirds rested in turns of four hours, dressed, and arms in hand; in daytime the men were sent to the rear in relays for undressing and washing. From each battalion a party was detached and equipped with tools and

lanterns, to repair any damage done to the works; oil was stored in covered holes in the ground, and there was also firewood; but the latter commodity was scarce, and economy had been enjoined. Each battalion had its own ambulance party for picking up the wounded, provided with roughly made stretchers. In each redoubt there was a party equipped with buckets for quenching conflagrations, in case the forage and other stores should catch fire; these attended also to the water-supply. The sewage was disposed of in out-of-the-way spots, where holes had been dug. Each outpost had a small protective work, and each sentry a circular hole with raised banks as a shelter-pit. We were almost sorry that none of these excellent arrangements were called into play so far as our redoubt was concerned: for the latter was not attacked.

The commanders of the Vid bridge guard and the Opanetz redoubts, which formed, as it were, the western and northern doors of our position, had been instructed to maintain their posts until the last man had perished.

To conclude the preliminaries of the third battle I give the summary of the Russian forces attacking us, as stated by Kuropatkin and others:—

West Army.

Commander: Prince Charles of Roumania.

Chief-of-Staff: General Sotow.

	Batts.	Squads.	Guns.
Ninth Corps (2 Divisions): General Krüdener	20	12	100
Fourth Corps (2 Divisions): General Krylow	22	16	88
Roumanian Army (3 Divisions): General Tchernat	42	32	120
Detachment of General Prince Imeretinski (second, General Skobelev)	20	12	90
Cavalry Division: General Loschkareff	—	16	12
Siege artillery	—	—	20
Sundry reinforcements	3	3	14
Totals	107	91	444

or, 100,000 men (of which 12,000 were cavalry).

Thus the proportions were :—

Infantry : Russians, 83,000 men ; Turks, 27,000 men—or, roughly, 3 to 1.

Cavalry : Russians, 12,000 men ; Turks, 2,000 men—or, roughly, 6 to 1.

Artillery : Russians, 444 guns ; Turks, 72 guns—or, roughly, 6 to 1.

The three Roumanian Divisions and the Ninth Corps formed the Russian right wing, the Fourth Corps the centre, the Imeretinski Detachment the left wing ; cavalry was on each flank.

CHAPTER X

THE THIRD BATTLE OF PLEVNA

SEPTEMBER 7 TO 12, 1877

I WAS roused at 6 A.M. on Friday, September 7, by Tereb, who, with his squad, formed the guard of the redoubt, and who said that cannon had been heard in the direction of Grivitza and Radishevo. I ordered my two drummers to beat the alarm, and in less than a minute the company was in position behind the parapet of the redoubt. The artillerymen were already at their stations; the other companies turned up a few moments later, and soon afterwards my major, the colonel, and Adil Pasha were among us.

The morning was raw and chilly; the wind had dropped; a drizzling rain exercised a dispiriting influence, worse than that of hostile batteries. The ground was slippery, the sky of a uniform grey colour. I mounted the parapet; but though it was moderately clear with us, I could detect no enemy. In the south and south-east a white mist obscured the view. Soon it grew lighter and the rain ceased; it became close and oppressive; the air was still, and heavy vapours hung over the ground.

Towards eight the cannonade grew louder in the south and south-east. I saw that the Bash Tabiyas replied, but what the redoubts beyond the Bulgareni road did was hidden by the mist. Our battery merely fired one or two test shots: there was no enemy to fire at.

All day long till dusk the distant shelling continued. An unimportant fire broke out in an encampment at the back



of the redoubt on our right, and the tents were shifted 500 yards to the west. In this my company assisted. In Atouf Tabiya there was also a flare-up. Some shells, coming from the east, exploded 200 yards in rear of our redoubt. At noon two battalions arrived from the south to reinforce the northern flank, as I have already stated in the previous chapter; I presume the Mushir thought the bombardment in the south was intended as a feint, and that the real attack would take place against our left wing. In this he was mistaken. We remained in our positions during the day, and turned in at night in relays, disheartened by our enforced idleness. We heard that the shelling had done hardly any injury to our works or our troops, and that no attack had been undertaken. During the night the Russians fired at intervals of twenty to twenty-five minutes from Grivitzza and Radishevo.

The following day (September 8) was spent much in the same fashion. The weather was murky and threatening, but no rain fell. The hostile guns appeared to have moved nearer to our positions, to judge from the sound. I climbed our signal-pole, and noticed through the telescope that the Russians had erected a mast, with two men as outlooks, on the top of the hill across which leads the road to Pelishat. At midday the enemy's batteries came within 1,500 yards of the Bash Tabiyas; from a suitable position I could see the dark lines through my glasses. During the afternoon Roumanian infantry appeared east of these works, made a demonstration, and retreated on being received with rifle-fire. They left 200 killed and wounded behind; most of the latter were taken prisoners. We heard that in the south also the hostile artillery had approached. The Turkish shelling was more vigorous than on the previous day. In front of our redoubt no enemy was visible; but from Opanetz came the news that strong masses of Roumanian cavalry had been noticed drawing westward. In the evening we learnt that our right wing had been smartly engaged with Russian infantry between Krishin and Plevna, and that the Russians

had suffered severely ; as a matter of fact, Skobelev lost 1,000 men on this day. During the night the shelling continued at intervals ; the Bash Tabiyas fired every fifteen minutes ; the other Turkish works were silent. At midnight a false alarm was given and we took up positions ; heavy rifle-fire was heard in the east ; the men in our front trenches fired at haphazard into the darkness, but no response was given ; soon it grew quiet and we returned to our sleeping-quarters.

On the 9th the artillery duel was renewed at daybreak, with increased vigour so far as the Turkish guns were concerned. Weather much the same. Rain fell in the morning ; later it cleared. The outlook reported at midday cavalry a mile north of our redoubt. Adil sent his two squadrons forward, a battalion from our redoubt followed, and our battery began to shell ; but the enemy disappeared towards the north-west, and our troops returned without having come to an engagement. In the afternoon the major told me that there had been an explosion of ammunition in Yunuz Tabiya, which had killed and wounded fifty men ; with this exception the damage done by the Russian shells had been trifling. Our troops in the north were anxious to fight, and felt themselves aggrieved by the lack of attention they received from the enemy. Later in the afternoon I borrowed a horse and joined, with the major's consent, a reconnoitring party consisting of a squadron of regulars, a detachment of Circassians, and a number of officers. We trotted northward on the Nikopoli road for three miles, and saw a small body of Roumanian cavalry near Verbitza, who disappeared in the village on noticing us. The Circassians rode up to the houses, and were received with rifle-shots. The roads were in a bad condition, which was a providential thing for us. On our return to camp we were told that our right wing had again been successfully engaged. The night passed without incident ; we paid no heed to the occasional discharge of cannon in the south.

At daybreak on the 10th the cannonade was recommenced on both sides with great vigour. Impenetrable

mist in the direction of Grivitza ; moderately clear with us. Again we felt ourselves insulted at being completely ignored by the enemy. We heard that the infantry engagement at Krishin had been resumed, and that troops had been sent from the reserve to Yunuz Bey's assistance.⁸⁷ Later, Mehemed Nazif Bey was sent, with three battalions of the left wing (one each from Opanetz, Bukova, and Janik Bair redoubt east) towards Krishin ; I presume the Mushir had come to the conclusion that the real assault would, after all, take place in the south. As a matter of fact, no attempt was made upon our left wing, except the Bash Tabiyas, and my redoubt did not receive a single shell during the battle.

About 3 P.M. a big flare startled us, and we saw that a stock of forage and some huts with stores established in the rear of the Bash Tabiyas were blazing furiously. Almost at the same time the Turkish shells set fire to Radishevo, and the two conflagrations, visible from the summit of the Bair, and making a lurid smear in the heavy grey atmosphere, presented a grand and awful spectacle, to which the now uninterrupted cannonade on all points, save our own flank, played a suitable accompaniment. The forage fire had soon burned itself out, but the village blazed throughout the night, and lighted up the south-east horizon in a superb and terrible manner. At 5 P.M. rain set in, which lasted with hardly any interruption until the 13th. In the evening we heard that in the south we had so far been successful ; that our shells had caused an explosion of Russian ammunition wag-gons on the Pelishat road, and that one in Ibrahim Tabiya had killed and wounded thirty men, among the former Lieut.-Colonel Ibrahim Bey, the commander of that redoubt. The night passed under a spasmodic cannonade and without other incidents.

Thus ended the four days' bombardment by which the Russians had sought to prepare their great attack. They had not gained their object. The redoubts were on the 11th in much the same condition as they had been on the 6th, the trifling damage done during the day having been repaired at

night. Fresh works had actually been constructed: for instance, the trenches of Omer Tabiya. We had lost, all told, 500 men killed and wounded, including eighty disabled by explosions and 300 casualties during the infantry engagement on the right wing.⁸⁸ The Turkish soldiers, so far from being demoralised, simply laughed at the Russian batteries. That was the result of 30,000 shells received during those four days. The reason of this ridiculous failure is to be found in the fact that the Russian guns fired from distances unsuitable to their make and calibre. The Russian artillerymen were remarkably timid; in every respect the Turkish gunners were their superiors.

Tuesday, September 11, the first day of the actual battle, opened with a drizzling rain and in a white mist. The latter cleared a little towards noon; the rain continued all day, occasionally with a heavy downpour, mostly in a fine, demoralising spray. The ground was a swamp; the wet penetrated our clothing and soaked us to the skin; it invaded our sleeping-apartments and store-chambers, and precautions had to be taken to keep the ammunition dry.

The cannonade was furious for some hours; then, at nine, there was a lull; before midday it recommenced on all points; an hour later it lessened, and at 1:30 we heard rifle-fire in the south. I climbed our pole, and saw dense masses of Russian infantry on the western slope of the hill south of Grivitza. At 3 p.m. the Bash Tabiyas were hotly engaged. The colonel made a rearrangement of the troops in the trenches, so that eight companies (one battalion) were distributed in such a way as to man the redoubt and its system of ditches; the troops in the trench leading to the east redoubt were withdrawn, and this trench was occupied by the garrison of the other work. This left two battalions (mine and another) disengaged; these were formed in march columns on the summit of the Bair. A Circassian orderly from the Bash Tabiyas said that the Roumanians had attacked furiously, and had been repelled with terrific losses.

By four o'clock, the rain still coming down pitilessly and

the mist having cleared a little, the action seemed general along the line, except with us, in Bukova, and in Opanetz. We could not see much, except through our glasses and from lofty positions ; but we could *hear*. It sounded as if the universe were dissolving into its elements in a hurricane of thunder and eruptions. The heavy, moisture-laden air beat down the powder-smoke ; lazily it curled along the ground in huge white, vapoury balls, bringing its own aroma with it. As there is no music, be it conceived by ever so subtle a brain and penned by ever so cunning a hand, so beautiful as the glorious clash of steel, so is no scent sweeter to the nostrils of a brave man than the smell of powder. He who has ever been on a battle-field knows that it is to the soldier as the red rag to the bull. We, condemned to idleness, whilst around us men were playing for their lives, sniffed the air, and cursed those who kept us there ; the horses neighed vehemently ; the minutes dragged out into eternities ; and every eye rested upon the entrance to the redoubt, whence the order to advance was to proceed.

The two battalions were drawn up in parallel march columns in rear of the redoubt. Every detail had been attended to, for our major was an excellent officer in that respect. The condition of every rifle was faultless ; the men had their eighty cartridges each, their bags filled with biscuits, their flasks with water. We had sharpened our swords to razor-edges, and our revolvers were loaded in each chamber.

At four Adil's aide-de-camp galloped up, and immediately the order was given to the other battalion to proceed to the Bash Tabiyas, where (so I heard from our major) the Roumanians, now reinforced by a Russian division, were preparing a fresh attack.

Five minutes later a Circassian came *ventre à terre* from the direction of the Grivitza bridge, on the Bulgareni road ; he was smoke-begrimed, and had ridden so hard that his horse broke down. Adil and his staff trotted up ; a hurried conversation took place. Adil beckons to the major, who gallops up ;

a few words, and back comes our leader, rises in his stirrups, and sings out : ' The battalion will proceed to Krishin with the utmost speed.' In less than thirty seconds we are off at a quick-march. Adil and his officers draw their swords and wave a ' good-bye ' ; we give them a lusty cheer.

Across sloppy meadows, ankle-deep in the slush, on fields where maize and wheat have once grown, right towards the hotbed of the action, into the teeth of the cannonade whence proceed the vapours that greet and intoxicate us. Down comes the merciless rain, but we heed it not, for wetter than we are men cannot be.

The major was at the head, with the Circassian. Then came my company, I at its head, the colour squad behind me. But our beloved standard hung limp and soaked on its pole. Next came the eight drummers, beating their instruments lustily, to give elasticity to our soil-clogged feet. The three other companies followed, in columns of companies, the last having charge of some empty horse-carts.

The major beckoned to me, and said as I came up : ' I am afraid we shall be beaten in the south. Do not tell the men, but inform your compatriot, and do your best, you two Englishmen.'

I saluted and fell back, and told Jack, who squeezed my hand, and said : ' We shall see their behinds again.' The poor boy's mode of expression was more forcible than refined.

We proceeded by the way which I had tramped on the day of the second battle : down the southern slope of the Bair, across the Grivitzza bridge, near which were posted a squadron of dismounted Ottoman Cossacks and a company of Chasseurs with two Whitworth guns ; on the Bulgareni road westward, thence up the hill on which the great bayonet charge had taken place on July 30, and on which the centre redoubts now stood ; then to headquarters' hill and past the Ikhtihat Tabiya, where we came in sight of the ten or twelve green tents which served as residences to the Mushir and his staff. Half a squadron of regulars stood

here, part of Osman's escort. The Circassian left us, to advise the Mushir of our arrival, the latter being on the other (southern) slope of the hill. We had time to take breath, liberate our boots from the fetters of mud, and look around us.

The cannonade was terrific, and every few seconds there was heard on our right wing the peculiar rattle of company-fire. Ikhtihat Tabiya was almost denuded of soldiers, except its artillery; beside the escort squadron, two batteries which fired in the direction of Radishevo, and some Circassians, there were no troops on the hill, for every available man had been sent to the south.

We stood facing south. On our right, half a mile away, was the town, filling up a depression of the ground. On our left, beyond our own works, we could see the hill between Grivitzza and Radishevo, with the dark lines of the enemy, two miles from us. At that time (4.30 or 5 P.M.) the attack on our centre had already collapsed, and the Russians had retreated. In front of Omer Tabiya the meadows and devastated maize fields were studded with dead and dying.⁸⁹ This redoubt had been the object of the Russian attack, against which the enemy had hurled his column five times. The Saloniki men (whom I saw on the spot where the Radishevo road leaves Plevna) had charged brilliantly. In the last assault a handful of Russians had actually penetrated into the redoubt.⁹⁰ Ibrahim Tabiya, the most advanced of our centre works, had not been attacked. Looking ahead, the hill which was crowned by the Tahir Tabiya limited our view.

We had waited hardly three minutes when the major (who had accompanied the Circassian) returned and gave the order to advance. We faced half to the right, and having passed beyond the crest, came upon the Mushir and his staff of six or eight officers, dismounted, their horses being held by the detachment of regulars who attended them; twenty or thirty Circassians stood ready on their impatient, long-tailed, ugly little brutes, to serve as messengers.

Osman was dictating to a young aide-de-camp, all the time scanning the south with his telescope—the former standing, the latter sitting on a camp-stool. Beside them was a bearded, gaunt Circassian, waiting to be despatched; he looked out of proportion to his small horse. A little in the rear was a rough shed, from which started three lines of wires: the telegraph-office. As we passed the Mushir shouted to us to do our duty and the Prophet would help us. The men cried ‘Allah!’ Lieutenant Azif seized the colours and waved them; I raised my sword and joined lustily in the cheers. Osman always carried a pencil behind his ear, butt-end in front. This he grasped involuntarily—a habit of his: he would seize his pencil with an impetuous gesture in moments of danger or excitement, much as an armed man clutches his sword.

We turned again half to the right, down the slope of the hill, towards the houses. Here our track was crossed by a train of carts with wounded, wending their way to town painfully over the soft ground. There was confusion and a brief delay as the two processions crossed each other. To the left I perceived 100 men, singly or in small knots, who were wandering disconsolately about or trying to gain the shelter of the streets furtively—stragglers dispersed in the fights. The major had noticed them, and shouted to me to try and get them to join us. ‘Shoot them down if they refuse,’ cried he. I sang out to Jack and Sergeant Bakal; we three left the ranks and went among the fugitives, imploring, exhorting, swearing, commanding, in a nonsensical and illogical manner. All the time Jack and I held our revolvers in the right hand, and Bakal had his rifle ready to give emphasis to his appeal. We collected thirty men; the others stole away from us. I discharged my revolver, Jack followed suit; but though we missed, the distance being too great, it had the effect of bringing back another twenty. Meanwhile some lieutenants and sergeants had come up from the other companies, having perceived what we were about; one of them shot a fugitive in the leg, and finally we

had seventy men, whom we brought back to the battalion. 'In equal parts among the four companies' commanded the major. We made a rapid division, and each of my three squads had five or six of them, who began to feel ashamed of themselves and regain courage.

Hardly had we completed our arrangements when the battalion started, the carts having meanwhile passed our track.

We gained the muddy, well-nigh impassable streets. The panic-stricken inhabitants stood at their doors, the Turks anxious and trembling, the Bulgarians sullen and suspicious-looking, as if they contemplated evil. Rifles were levelled at them as we passed at quick-march; but the officers prevented slaughter. 'They mean mischief,' said someone, and events proved that he was right. The major hailed a Turkish civilian, who accompanied and guided us. Some children distributed bread and cakes; there was a scramble for these, and I was glad when the stock was exhausted. The men, having had only biscuits since the morning, devoured the delicacies greedily. From the flat roofs men, women, and children were watching the battle in the south, where Skobelev and Yunuz Bey, a well-matched pair, once more faced each other. The major informed me that the wire between headquarters and the Krishin redoubts had been cut; that the Mushir was without news from Yunuz Bey, and entertained grave fears of his safety; that the Plevna redoubts (Issa and Kavanlik Tabiyas) were threatened, if not already in the enemy's hands; that in that case the Krishin redoubts were cut off and the town itself endangered.

We turned northward by the main thoroughfare, passed a mosque where some hundreds of slightly wounded prisoners were confined, guarded by convalescents from the ambulances and armed labourers, and left town by the Temina road, picking up many fugitives without stopping the march. As we approached the scene of conflict the thunder of the guns and the clatter of musketry became deafening. Thick clouds of smoke enveloped the landscape, held down by the heavy

atmosphere and the drizzling rain. On our right were dripping vineyards, in which so many disbanded troops had taken shelter that the *embarras de richesses* prevented us from reclaiming any more. As it was, our battalion had already 200 strangers in its lines, and it was not wise to lower its excellent *morale* by associating with it too large a proportion of beaten and demoralised men. Some joined us voluntarily, and we learned that Kavanlik Tabiya was in the enemy's hands, and that twelve battalions, which had successively arrived from various parts, had been totally defeated and had disbanded. A corporal of Chasseurs told me this. I ran up to the major, and took the liberty to inform him that if we continued by the Ternina road we should come within 400 yards of Kavanlik Tabiya—which meant that we should have the enemy's fire on our left flank, and should be annihilated. The major had already heard the fatal news from some Circassians who had galloped forward to meet us. He seemed to have lost his equanimity.

'Emin wounded, a redoubt gone, twelve battalions disbanded, and only one fresh battalion—we can do no good!' he exclaimed.

Meanwhile our column had come to a dead-stop. Seeing that the major was not so cool as he ought to have been, I suggested: 'Let the men turn left about, so as to face the enemy.' This was done. As yet we had no losses, and had not received a shot; but hardly had the change of front been made when a shell exploded among us. This brought the major to his senses. He gave these orders: 'Last company in line of skirmishers in front; two companies on the road to extend right and left; left flank to draw forward along the gardens; one company in rear in the vineyards'—all of which were executed promptly and in perfect order.

We were on the Ternina road, except the left flank, which had advanced 200 yards beyond it; thus we were facing almost due south, the front describing a quarter-circle open to the south. The extreme right was barely a quarter of a mile beyond the last houses of Plevna, the

left touched the gardens of the town. The road leads along the crest of a gently rising hill in a south-westerly direction; on the summit, a mile and a half from Plevna, was Baghlarbashi Tabiya, the most northerly of the Krishin redoubts. Behind us were vineyards; in front of us, bare fields and patches of what had been cultivation, devoid of shelter, gently sloping away from us; below, between us and the Tultchenitza, half a mile from us, was Kavanlik, the redoubt which we now knew to be in Russian hands. But the atmosphere was so dense and the smoke so thick that we had only occasional glimpses of this work; the vapours hung heavily over the bottom of the little valley.

We had been but a minute in our positions—apparently unnoticed by the enemy, who, presumably, expected no attack from this side: for we received no rifle-fire, and beyond two more shells, which did no harm, no hostile attention was paid to us—when we company leaders were summoned to the major, whom we found in consultation with a lieutenant-colonel (Riza Bey) who had galloped up from Baghlarbashi on seeing us. What we learnt was, briefly, this:

Rifa'at Pasha, who had been sent to the scene of conflict early in the day, had now only four companies of Chasseurs left; the rest of his troops (twelve battalions, viz. Emin's eight and four which he had brought with him) had disbanded after Kavanlik Tabiya had fallen. The Krishin redoubts were as yet in our hands; but Yunuz Tabiya, the most southerly of these, was so seriously endangered that Yunuz Bey had removed his three guns from it. Issa Tabiya was as good as lost. Rifa'at was at that moment collecting a number of stragglers in Baghlarbashi, previous to undertaking an attack upon Kavanlik. We were to maintain our positions at any cost, so as to prevent the enemy from getting into Plevna, and on the sign being given from Baghlarbashi we were to storm Kavanlik from the north, Rifa'at and his detachment coming from the west. The four companies of Chasseurs would join our right flank, so as to extend our lines.

‘Shoot down any man who attempts to leave the ranks,’ said Riza.

The Chasseurs arrived whilst we were yet in consultation, and formed to our right, one company in line of skirmishers in advance, two in columns of companies on the road, one as reserve in the rear, in the vineyards. Their major was with them: he joined Riza Bey, who took command of this one and a half battalion, upon which rested the fate of the battle and the hope of the army. We went back to our companies. One of the latter was in front, in a long, extended line; one was 100 yards to the rear, retained as reserve, among the vineyards; two (mine and another) occupied the space between the gardens of Plevna on the left and the Chasseurs on the right. I formed my company in two lines: Tereb’s and Bakal’s squads, with the colour squad, in front; Seymour’s squad and a scratch detachment of fifty stragglers in second line. The latter I placed under a strange lieutenant who had tried his best in the vineyards to collect fugitives, and had joined us with his men. The time must have been about 5.30. The roar of cannon and the clatter of rifle-fire came uninterruptedly from the directions of Krishin and Issa Tabiya, and rendered the conveyance of intelligence difficult.

Suddenly we saw the flashes of rifle-fire in the valley below us, where there was a heavy cloud of mist and smoke, and where it was growing dark. Our skirmishers were firing steadily. The bullets began to whistle past me; several men of my company were struck down. Shells flew overhead into the vineyards. Riza Bey, who was close to me, had his glasses on Baghlarbashi. He shouted to the bugler nearest to him; the signal to advance was given. Our skirmishers fell back upon the main body and mingled indiscriminately with us; the column commenced to move. On my right I saw a deep trench, belonging to Kavanlik Tabiya, end on towards us; here the Russians had built up a wall of dead bodies across the entrance, and were firing over it. A terrific rifle-discharge greeted us, but on we went, giving a volley at every fifth or sixth step. The major of Chasseurs fell with his

horse. We came within the cloud of mist and smoke, and saw Kavanlik Tabiya looming darkly 200 yards ahead; in front were dense masses of Russian Chasseurs. The enemy's fire, claiming many victims, brought our lines first to a stop, then to a receding movement; a little later the bugler sounded the retreat. On my right I noticed our Chasseurs drawing away from us, southward; I concluded (rightly) that they were making for Baghlarbashi, and that it would be wise to follow their example (although no such order was given), to prevent the enemy, who had meanwhile commenced to advance, from dividing our line into two parts. Maintaining a steady fire we drew slowly half backwards, half to the right, the Russians coming forward at the same rate of celerity, so that the distance between the two lines (200 yards) was maintained. This continued for two or three minutes, when once more the bugles sounded the charge. The order was given for the reserves to come forward. Riza Bey was in front of the line, my major beside him. As yet our troops were in perfect order and well in hand. We advanced at a quickstep; the enemy hung back, and we came within 100 yards of the redoubt. But here a terrific volley made deep gaps in our lines: we began to slacken, to halt, to waver; first one man faced half-round, then another, then knots of three or four, and finally the whole column was drawn to the right; for instinctively we turned towards Baghlarbashi as our haven of refuge. When we were again 250 yards away from the redoubt Riza stopped, shouted 'Come back,' and waved his sword frantically to the retreating mass. The major joined him; then I did so, with Sergeant Bakal and a dozen men; Lieutenant Azif seized the colours from the already running corporal and came up to our group; twenty or thirty of our men and as many Chasseurs followed. I looked round for Jack with the unspoken question: 'Why is he not here?' but he and his squad had disappeared. I saw them in the growing dusk drawing away to the left, towards the Ternina road. In this he was right; for the retreat should always take place towards the point of starting,

unless an order to the contrary has been given ; but had my company done this we should have been separated from the Chasseurs, and should have lost our connection with Baghlarbashi. It was one of those cases, frequent in warfare, where neither of two opposing opinions can be held to be absolutely wrong.

There was no time for reflection. Our little group counted now a hundred and fifty men, who stood their ground for a minute or so and suffered severely. It seemed easier to advance than to remain there to be annihilated. We went at a quick pace in the direction of the redoubt, much at haphazard ; for it was growing darker with every minute. Suddenly we found ourselves within fifteen paces of Russian skirmishers. I discharged my revolver. Then we heard the clatter of horses' hoofs ; hastily we formed three sides of a square. Fifty horsemen galloped up to us, they as much in uncertainty as to who we were as we were ignorant of their identity. It turned out to be Cossacks, and I had the gratification to unseat one ugly little devil. ' It is no use, we must go back,' said Riza Bey, gnashing his teeth. We faced towards Baghlarbashi. The Cossacks came close upon our heels as we retreated, and once more we had to turn. Our volleys dispersed them, but a few got to close quarters : I had to use my sword ; a man beside me was run through by a lance. Just then a handful of Chasseurs, who had foreseen or guessed our predicament, came up ; we fired into the darkness so as to prevent further pursuit. Then a small body of Circassians joined us, and whilst they swarmed around to look for the Cossacks—whom they found eventually and exchanged shots and blows with—we effected our retreat to Baghlarbashi, where the majority of our men were already assembled. The redoubt itself was so crowded that we had to be content to find shelter in the trenches. Our little scratch detachment had lost fifty men between the time when it had formed itself spontaneously around Riza Bey and Azif's standard and that of its gaining shelter.

It was now quite dark. The confusion was terrible. Men

of five or six battalions were mixed indiscriminately. The redoubt itself was held by the battalion which had originally occupied it, and which was still in tolerably good condition. I helped my major to collect and reorganise his battalion—a difficult task in the darkness, without artificial light, save the occasional striking of a match. The chaos was terrifying. Some men lighted a fire; but this was put out by the officers, to prevent the Russian gunners from having an object to aim at. A squad of the company which had served as reserve in the vineyard at the first assault, and the third squad of my company, had disappeared; they had retreated in the opposite direction, and we hoped they would find shelter in Plevna.

Rifa'at Pasha had undertaken his attack with half of the redoubt battalion and the remnants of four or five battalions, altogether 800 men; he had been shot in the leg, and the soldiers had carried him back to the redoubt, in which the wounded Emin Pasha and several hundreds of disabled men already lay. Of my company I missed (besides the third squad) fifty men; many of the stragglers incorporated in it before the charge had again gone astray, so that I had now only 100 men left. Tereb was shot in the arm; it was only a flesh wound, but bled profusely. Azif and the colours were safe. Sergeant Bakal was bleeding in the cheek; a bullet had grazed him, but he disdained to pay attention to the wound. The strange lieutenant was missing; I ascertained later that he had been killed. Including the absent squads my battalion was minus 250 men; but half of this number turned up afterwards.

To get order and discipline into this chaos of beaten and disheartened men, all soaked to the skin and nearly famishing, was a herculean task. Finally we succeeded (I willingly attribute my share in the labour to Bakal), and my battalion occupied, two hours after the attack, one of the trenches in a tolerably solid, united, and disciplined body. The stragglers were formed into scratch companies and placed under officers who had lost their troops; these and the

remnants of the four companies of Chasseurs occupied the other trenches; the battalion attached to the redoubt was in it.

Meanwhile Riza Bey had sent a body of Circassians forward on the Ternina road to Plevna. They came back with the grave news that the road and the vineyards beyond were occupied by the enemy; thus the Krishin redoubts were cut off from the town and the main body of the army, for in the Tultchenitza Valley also the Russians had firmly lodged themselves. We found out that Issa Tabiya had been taken a little while after we had made our attack upon Kavanlik.⁹¹ Almost at the same moment Kanli Tabiya had fallen into the hands of the Roumanians, after a desperate resistance; but this we did not learn until the following day.

These disastrous discoveries were communicated to the commanders of the other three redoubts. During the night both Riza Bey and Yunuz Bey sent to the Mushir mounted messengers, who made a long *détour* and took four to five hours over the journey, the distance between Yunuz Tabiya and headquarters hill in a straight line being three miles.

It is difficult to ascertain the strength of, and the losses sustained by, the attacking force in the abortive attempt to recover Kavanlik Tabiya which I have described. We were minus a third of our men; but it is safe to assume that half of these were stragglers. Judging from the number of wounded who were brought into Baghlarbashi during the night and in the early morning, or who crawled up by themselves, and from the dead whom we saw lying about next day, I estimate the loss at 300. The figures in the following table are approximate:—

*Strength of the Force Attacking Kavanlik on the Evening
of September 11, 1877.*

My battalion, including collected stragglers	900
Four companies Chasseurs	250
Half of the battalion occupying Baghlarbashi	300

Rifa'at's body of remnants of four or five	
battalions	500
Circassians	50
	<hr/>
Total	2,000
Less losses : killed	100
wounded	200
stragglers	300
	<hr/>
	600
	<hr/>
	1,400
Plus other half of Baghlarbashi battalion	300
	<hr/>
gives	1,700

as the number holding Baghlarbashi Tabiya during the night of September 11-12.

Twenty-one Turkish battalions had fought on this flank on the 11th. Deducting seven battalions, the original garrisons of the six redoubts, leaves fourteen taken from other parts, viz. one from Tahir Tabiya, nine from the reserves, four from the left wing.

The rifle-fire had ceased, the cannonade grew more spasmodic ; for the day the slaughter seemed to be over. During the night a shot every fifteen minutes was fired on either side. The Russian fire was directed on Yunuz Tabiya ; Baghlarbashi received no shells ; whilst the guns of the Krishin works took the lost redoubts as their aim.

Although order had been somewhat restored we were still in a fever-heat of excitement. There was so much to be done that rest seemed out of the question. Humanity compelled us to pick up the wounded, at least those whom we could reach. The night was very dark. Men were sent with the few lanterns that were handy, and before morning 100 had been brought in, among them many Russians. There were three surgeons in the redoubt, including our own, who had accompanied the battalion ; these did their best with almost every necessary deficient. I saw them at work, with bare arms and blood-stained hands, soaked to the skin, faces streaming with the sweat of indescribably hard work ; they

looked, with their saws and knives, like the torturers of the Inquisition. Shirts served as bandages. Volunteers assisted; but hardened men turned sick at some of the sights: halves of faces carried away, exposing the core of life's machinery; limbs torn off, bowels hanging out; pools of blood in which swam brain-remnants and intestines like living worms; amputated legs and arms thrust into corners as offal for the dogs. One mutilation too ghastly for words made a German surgeon exclaim: 'Such a sight one ought to show to the kings and emperors!' The damaged earthworks had to be repaired. The stock of ammunition still remaining in the redoubt (thirty cartridges per man) was dealt out. Biscuits were distributed. Water ran short, for the enemy held the springs in the vineyards. Many drank the muddy pool-water, mixed with blood, which had collected in the trenches; this caused vomiting, followed by thirst even greater than before; the drinking of ground-water was therefore prohibited. Unhappily, there was in Baghlarbashi no system of draining the works and utilising the rain, such as we had in the Janik Bair redoubts. Sentries and outposts were placed around the work; the former were relieved every half-hour, as the men fell down with exhaustion. The troops were kept awake by frequent inspections and roll-calls; men who could recite were asked to do so; patriotic and martial poems were much in demand, and proved efficacious. But it seemed ludicrous to hear one young fellow spout sentimentally of the nightingale's love for the rose, and of the moon-beams kissing open the lily's closed chalice.

Riza Bey now commanded the redoubt, the original commander, Major Rassim, having been disabled, and his dispositions were energetic, capable, and effective.

At ten rifle-fire and cries of 'Allah' were heard north-west of Kavanlik; some of our companies turned out, and I brought mine out in tolerably good order for attack; but the fight was over before we had tramped a hundred steps. This was repeated twice before midnight: some brave officer among the enemy had collected and organised a scratch detachment,

and considered it his duty to molest us. It was said that in the darkness one half of this body mistook the other half for opponents, and caused grievous losses.

I had an hour's sleep, in ten-minute snatches, on the wet ground. I had to see to the outposts, the distribution of cartridges and biscuits, the dealing out of water in spoonfuls, loaded revolver in hand—in which labours the lion's share was borne by Bakal, indefatigable though wounded. The most arduous task was to keep the men awake, and uphold their spirits by praising, blaming, praying, cursing, exhorting, imploring, commanding, joking—whichever mode seemed appropriate or efficacious.

Such a night of terrors I shall never forget : cut off from the main army, in wet clothes, with no water, hardly any food, the soaked soil of a ditch as a couch, and the drizzling sky as a roof ; defeated, with no prospect of recovering our positions ; surrounded by fields covered with dead and dying men, the latter moaning pitifully throughout those hours of unspeakable horrors !

The most heated fancy cannot realise the sufferings of the wounded, many of whom were left for twelve hours on the spot where they had fallen before receiving the first-aid, or the drop of water that a maimed man craves for. Hundreds must have bled to death or succumbed to thirst and tortures. Picture to yourself the thoughts of such a man, if he were conscious—someone's father, husband, or sweetheart : his awful loneliness ; unable to move ; maimed, bleeding, rent by physical pain, and frantic with thirst, in a silent field of dead bodies staring with vacant eyes up to the cruel firmament ; now and then the faint groan of a fellow-sufferer or an agonising appeal to the pitiless heavens—thousands of living men near, and not one able or allowed to help. He is not conscious of having done any wrong to deserve such terrible punishment—all the horrors of the night that will never end because two emperors have fallen out !

Throughout the hours of darkness the Russians fired every few minutes a volley from the Plevna redoubts, to prevent a

surprise attack. Some of our men went with pails and cooking-vessels to a brook which flowed past the southern face of these works ; having crept stealthily to the bank, they came within reach of a volley, and only one returned, terror-stricken, but with two full buckets. A second party came back in dismay without having reached their destination. After that expeditions for procuring water were forbidden. Some Chasseurs went, nevertheless ; they met a body of Russians similarly engaged ; the two detachments concluded by signs a sort of armistice, and filled their cans and buckets without molesting each other ; a kind-hearted Russian threw some biscuits to our men across the brook.⁹² When this became known other water-parties organised themselves ; but just then Kavanlik gave a terrific volley, and the men abandoned the expedition. I had to prevent some of mine from going by main force. Riza gave strict orders that no man should leave the trenches under penalty of death.

At midnight there was a huge flare-up in the south of Plevna, which lighted the country for miles around, and showed us the triangular-shaped field, 1,400 yards long, bordered on both sides by vine-overgrown slopes, between us and Kavanlik. It was covered with dead and dying. The conflagration, burning with terrific fury in one tall column of flame, reflected in the numberless pools of rain-water, on the blank, slippery ground, the silent dark lines denoting slaughtered fellow-creatures ; the occasional flashes of discharging cannon, the long-drawn-out lightning of musketry volleys at regular intervals, made a spectacle of superb and awful grandeur. Superstitious men thought that God was destroying this globe for its iniquity.

The fire did not burn long. We learnt next day that a store of forage and grain had been set alight by the Christians of Plevna, who thus thanked Osman and his army for the indulgent and humane treatment they had received.

‘ Why did not the Mushir expel the Bulgarians when we first took possession of Plevna ? ’ asked everybody. A fire-eater like Suleiman would have driven out every man, woman,

and child. Thus kindness was rewarded by treachery—not the only instance during the campaign.

Wednesday, September 12, opened with a hideous, iron-grey, lustreless dawn. A cold wind, like the chill of death, swept over the fields, with their silent or faintly moaning victims of yesterday's slaughter. The rain had ceased, but the uniform grey sky gave promise of another wet day, a promise which it fulfilled faithfully, for after an hour's interruption the rain recommenced and continued till late at night. The ground was a morass. From Plevna a column of smoke mounted upwards, and was spread by the wind over the battle-field like a hideous canopy, blending with the damp vapours exhaled by the soil as the temperature rose. The men shivered in their wet clothes; hundreds must have caught a chill which eventually laid them low. Biscuits were nibbled for breakfast; those who were lucky enough to possess water shared it with famishing comrades. Notwithstanding orders, many lay down on their stomachs and lapped up the pool-slush, whilst near them corpses were lying in a compound of blood and mud.⁹³

In the early morning this order was read out in Baghlar-bashi: 'A message has been received from the Mushir saying that during the forenoon fifteen to twenty fresh battalions will undertake an attack upon the lost redoubts. With God's help we shall recover our positions and win the battle. At every point save this the Russians have been defeated, and have suffered heavily. The redoubts near Krishin are unconquered, and the troops there are in excellent spirits.'

The order was conveniently silent as to the loss of Kanli Tabiya; but of course we were then in blissful ignorance of this mishap—in fact, I did not know of it until past noon.

'Whence is the Mushir to get the fresh battalions?' asked the officers in whispers. 'There are none left, and no reinforcements can have arrived, for the Russian cavalry hold the Orkanyé road.'

It became known among the officers that in the Krishin

redoubts artillery ammunition was running short, and that there were no more than six shots per gun left ; but, on an average, a single shot of a single Turkish gun had more effect than an hour's shelling by a Russian battery. The Russian unit of artillery was the battery of eight pieces ; the Turkish unit was the gun.

We kept our doubts to ourselves, and encouraged the men as best we could. Confidence increased, and the Mushir's message created lively satisfaction.

In the early morning we got numbers of wounded into the redoubt ; on their side the Russians were similarly occupied, and the opposing forces abstained from firing upon the men engaged in this humane pursuit.

From our redoubt we could plainly see Kavanlik Tabiya, which was half a mile away and 200 feet below our level. It was crowded with soldiers. We counted eight guns, which commenced to shell us without doing much injury. The trenches in front were occupied by skirmishers. Looking north-west, towards Plevna, we had before us the fields of yesterday's conflict ; on the left the orchards came close up to the redoubt ; to the right was a cultivated patch 400 yards wide, sloping gently, and bordered by vineyards ; behind us, half a mile south, on our own level (which was the crest of a hill), were Talahat and Milas Tabiyas ; Yunuz Tabiya was hidden from us by the accidents of the ground. Every meadow or open space within our line of sight contained dead men ; the gardens and vineyards conveniently hid their horrors. Except that beyond Plevna (which was 400 feet below us) we could see the western crest of the Janik Bair, the view was extremely limited.

It were well here to give a *résumé* of the opposing forces which fought on this spot on the 12th and decided the battle.

	<i>Turks.</i>	Battalions.
Yunuz Tabiya		2
Talahat Tabiya		1

	Battalions.
Milas Tabiya	1
(These battalions, although they had suffered severely, were in good order and spirits).	
Reinforcement sent to Yunuz Bey	1
Stragglers from Emin and Rifa'at's defeated battalions, reorganised by Yunuz Bey : say 1,000 men, equal to	2
Baghlarbashi : 1,700 men, equal to	3
Mehemed Nazif Bey's 3 battalions, decimated but in good condition, stationed during the night south of Plevna, between Issa Tabiya and the Tultchenitza	3
Collected stragglers stationed during the night in the southern suburbs of Plevna, particularly at the street outlets, to prevent the Russians from invading the town ; say 500 men, equal to	1
Reinforcements sent by the Mushir on the 12th : Tahir Pasha with 5 battalions, Tewfik Bey with 2 battalions	7
Total	<u>21</u>

Russians.

Skobelev's force during the 11th, viz. 20 (being the strength of the detachment), less 3 retained by Imeretinski	17
Reinforcements sent during the 12th :	
By Imeretinski	2
By Krylow	3
Total	<u>22</u>

It must be borne in mind that on this spot the Russians had ninety guns against the Turks' ten guns, and twelve squadrons against our two.⁹⁴

Of the seven battalions which the Mushir sent as reinforcements to the right wing on the 12th, three came from Tahir Tabiya and the centre, and four from the left wing. It is interesting to note how the troops in the latter had gradually diminished. The left wing consisted originally

of fourteen battalions : three were sent, under Mehemed Nazif Bey, to the right wing early on the 11th, one later (mine), four on the 12th—this leaves six battalions ; of these, one had occupied Kanli Tabiya, and one had been sent thither from my redoubt ; these two had been defeated, and had either perished or been dispersed.¹⁵ Thus four battalions occupied towards the close of the battle the line (seven miles) between Bash Tabiya and Opanetz. It was a providential thing for us that the Russians did not attack us there.

Of the forty-six battalions which constituted the Turkish infantry, twenty-eight fought successively in the right flank, not including Tahir Tabiya, which, although nominally part of the right wing, had no share in the action on this spot, except with its four guns.

At 6 A.M. (heavy rain, but atmosphere remarkably clear) Tahir Pasha, with Colonel Hairi Bey, a few junior officers, mounted, and half a squadron of Saloniki men, arrived in Baghlarbashi, having come by the Ternina road, which was now free from enemies, but within rifle-range of Kavanlik. Tahir, by the Mushir's orders, took command of the attack, Hairi being his second. My major was called to the redoubt ; on his return I learnt that five fresh, or nearly fresh, battalions had been sent by the Mushir, and were forming in the vineyards west of Plevna under Lieut.-Colonel Abdullah Bey. The sign was to be an artillery volley from headquarters hill, where the battery had been shifted to the south-western slope, so as to be visible from Baghlarbashi. From this redoubt there took part in the attack my battalion, four companies of Chasseurs, and the Baghlarbashi battalion proper, whilst the duty of holding the works during our absence devolved upon a few scratch companies of collected stragglers and some dismounted Circassians. We formed quietly for storming in the trenches, my battalion on the right (one company skirmishers ; two—among them mine—in the fighting line, one in rear), with a scratch detachment of regulars, Circassians, and Salonikis on our right flank ; centre, six companies of the Baghlarbashi

battalion; left, two companies of Chasseurs; two of the former and two of the latter, as reserves, 200 yards in rear. The left flank was to get into touch with the right flank of Abdullah Bey's five battalions, and was extended accordingly. I append the constitution of the

*Force Attacking Kavanlik Tabiya on the Morning of
September 12.*

Commander: General of Brigade Tahir Pasha.

Second: Colonel Hairi Bey.

(Troops converging in a semicircle upon Kavanlik and Issa Tabiyas. Those destined to operate against Issa Tabiya, viz. Mehemed Nazif's three battalions, were to demonstrate only, so as to prevent the troops in the latter from coming to the aid of those in Kavanlik.)

A. Three battalions from the east, against Issa Tabiya: Lieut.-Colonel Mehemed Nazif Bey.

B. One scratch battalion from the north (Plevna), against both redoubts.

C. Five battalions from the vineyards, *i.e.* from the north and the north-west, against Kavanlik: Lieut.-Colonel Abdullah Bey.

D. Two and a half battalions from Baghlarbashi, *i.e.* from the west, against Kavanlik: Lieut.-Colonel Riza Bey.

E. A scratch detachment of cavalry on the right flank.

Total: Eleven and a half battalions and one squadron, say, 5,000 men.

The diagram on p. 262 explains the position.

At 6.30 a heavy concentrated artillery-fire was suddenly directed upon Baghlarbashi. The redoubt being now almost denuded of troops, the shells did no harm, except to the soil; but several exploded in the trenches, one of which killed two men of my company.

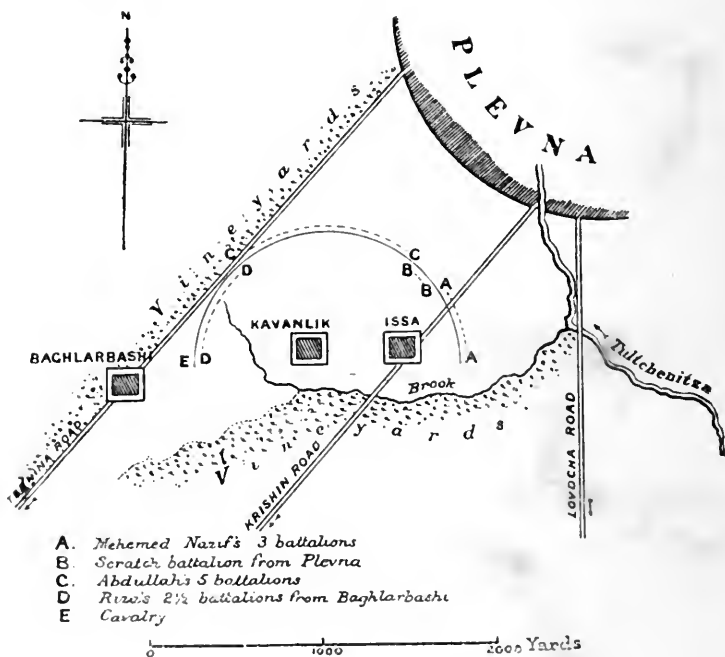
I had arranged my company thus:—

Right: first squad (Lieutenant Tereb, who insisted on coming in spite of his wound), forty men, two deep; right flank to keep in touch with cavalry.

Centre: colour squad (Lieutenant Azif), increased by stragglers to twenty-five men, four deep.

Left: second squad (Sergeant Bakal), forty men, two deep; left flank to keep in touch with the other line company of my battalion.

In second line: a scratch squad of fifty men, in single line, under Sergeant Tütünji (a stranger), fifty yards in rear of front line.



Third squad (Lieutenant Seymour): missing.

One hundred yards in advance of my front line was a squad of the skirmishing company of my battalion.

Having to fill up a certain gap in our line of attack, this was, I thought, the best arrangement I could make—prompted, as usual, by Bakal.

At 7.30 a look-out man on top of priest's ladder in Baghlarbashi fires rifle as a sign that headquarters battery has

commenced to shell. We leave trench and make at a quick-step in a straight line for Kavanlik. Many stumble on the slippery ground : grass-plots like ice, bare soil the consistency of syrup. A perfect deluge comes down. Dead bodies impede progress ; sometimes we have to jump over little mounds of corpses. One poor fellow, a Russian, who has been lying with shattered feet for fifteen hours on the spot, catches hold of my leg ; I shake him off, and a man finishes him with the bayonet.⁹⁶ The rest of the assault is blurred in my recollection ; I remember but the main features : Awful rifle-fire from Kavanlik trenches—guns discharge at point-blank range—gaps in my line—bugles sound ‘ Storm ’—bayonets fixed, and wild cries of ‘ Allah ’—our skirmishers fall back and mix with main body—we are now in front line—troops get into confusion as space becomes narrower—we get cramped, with 5,000 men coming from all sides towards a common centre—we enter one trench which Russian skirmishers have meanwhile abandoned—another, where Russians make stand—close quarters—bayonet fight ; I have to use sword and revolver—Russians retreat, turn, run to third trench, we close upon their heels—brief and desperate encounter in last trench, which we take—horrible fire from Kavanlik, now only 100 yards away. I get a glimpse of the houses in the south-western corner of Plevna, where Turkish inhabitants are crowding on the flat roofs, cheering and waving multi-coloured rags. We proceed to leave third trench, but lines falter under the awful fire from redoubt. We retreat to trench, where we come to a dead-stop. The impetus of the assault having been broken, I fear the attack has collapsed. ‘ Allah ’ from the north and north-west, but no longer with us, where men lie down and fire from trench, from behind corpses, or any shelter they can get—finally whole line, as far as I can see, flat on the ground, firing furiously. In this position ten minutes. Hearing again cries of ‘ Allah,’ I make a fresh attempt, with Tereb, Azif, Bakal, the corporal carrying the colours, and twenty-five men. I get Tütünji’s squad to come forward. Bakal and I lift

the men from the ground by main force, and give several who will not get up vigorous heel-kicks in fleshy parts. At length I have 100 men, a goodly number of them strangers. We proceed thirty yards—many are down—line falters; we find ourselves isolated, turn, come back at a trot upon the rest, who all face round, mistaking our intention. Din so terrible that commands become useless—powder-smoke, kept down by the rain, limits view to a radius of barely fifty yards—my bugler is on the ground. Only in the most advanced trench I succeed in stopping the backward movement. Our right flank exposed, as cavalry has disappeared. I order Tütünji's squad to turn about to the right *en potence* to prevent Russian counter-attack from this side—major gallops up, and gives command to prepare for fresh attack—in the trench and under the shelter of the smoke I reorganise company and get it into tolerable order, with Bakal's and Tereb's energetic assistance. The whole line advances again; but hardly have we reached nearest trench when bugles on the left unexpectedly sound 'Retreat.' Although the attack promises well, and the men are eager to proceed, we cannot but obey. We scamper back, and soon find ourselves, breathless, in the trenches of Baghlarbashi.

It took me half an hour to find my men and reorganise the company, which had lost twenty in killed, wounded, and missing. We occupied our old trench. My personal friends were safe. I had not a scratch. The bugler and some slightly wounded men crawled up later, the former more concerned about a gaping hole in his instrument than about that in his shoulder. The colours were completely riddled, and the tailor of my company had to sew the rags together. My battalion was minus fifty men. I estimated the loss to the attacking force at 500. Abdullah's five battalions had retreated to the vineyards.

At nine the disorder caused by the collapse of our attack had been overcome, thanks to the efforts of Tahir, Hairi, Riza, my major, and the company leaders; I, too, did my best, assisted by Tereb, Azif, and Bakal. We were ready

for a fresh attempt ; but none was undertaken, owing probably to the scarcity of ammunition ; some men had run out of cartridges ; none of my company had more than twenty-five left. I made a re-distribution, so that each man had fifteen cartridges.

Tahir Pasha's order to retreat at a moment when the storming was at its height, and showed as yet no signs of collapse, so far as Abdullah's five battalions were concerned, was for many days the subject that exercised our minds and gave rise to heated discussion. It became known that Tahir was in disgrace, and report spoke of a contemplated court-martial. Evidently he vindicated his character, for he retained the post of Chief-of-Staff to the end. It would be presumption on my part to comment. Tahir was a capable and courageous man ; there may have been causes at work of which I have no cognisance ; he must be held to have known his business ; in any case, there can be no doubt that he acted according to the light that was within him, not from craven motives.

What happened actually I learnt, of course, at a later date. Tahir sent a mounted messenger to Osman, informing him of the collapse of the attack, and of his conviction that it was impossible to recover the lost redoubts—that a fresh attempt would involve the army in ruin. Osman was furious. He despatched an orderly, calling Tahir back, and depriving him of his command. A council was held, in which all the officers, down to the rank of major, who were within reach took part. It was decided to make one more attempt with the last available battalions ; should it fail, the army was to abandon the Plevna position, force the road to Orkanyé, at present held only by hostile cavalry, and retreat thither. Colonel Tewfik Bey was given the command, and two fresh battalions—the last resource—were added to the force already assembled on the spot.

10 A.M. : I receive orders from my major to send a party to the redoubt for ammunition, a number of packhorses, despatched by the Mushir, having arrived by way of the vine-

yards. There was enough to give each man in Baghlarbashi his complement of eighty cartridges.

10.30 A.M.: Sudden violent artillery-fire from Milas and Talahat Tabiyas, whose six guns (including the three removed from Yunuz Tabiya for safety's sake) had hitherto discharged only at rare intervals. The reason of this was the arrival of ammunition carts sent by the Mushir. I was told that the difficulties which the convoy had encountered in the almost pathless vineyards, owing to the condition of the soil, had been indescribable; only to the superhuman exertions of the escort (Saloniki men), a party of engineers, and the drivers, assisted by civilians, it was due that the carts reached their destination.

11 A.M.: Baghlarbashi again the centre of concentrated Russian artillery-fire of the most violent description. We have to extend the lines in open order, so as to diminish casualties. My company lost three men.

11.30 A.M.: Russian column with twenty three-horse carts (which we know to contain infantry ammunition) appears on the Krishin-Plevna road, *en route* for Kavanlik. The four companies Chasseurs are sent forward into the vineyards and compel column to turn back, causing heavy loss; the guns of Milas and Talahat Tabiyas contribute to this. Two fresh attempts made by the Russians between noon and 3 P.M. to get their ammunition into Kavanlik have the same result.

Every Russian showing himself in and near Kavanlik was hailed with rifle-fire from the Baghlarbashi trenches; sometimes a hundred shots were hurled at a single man. Water-parties which the Russians sent to the brook in front of the redoubt were annihilated. The excitement was like that of the chase: fiendish shouts of delight greeted the fall of each man. We had meanwhile obtained water from the springs in the vineyards; at my major's instigation tubs were placed to catch the rain-water.

2 P.M.: Explosion of ammunition in Kavanlik, at which the Turks give a cheer.

2.30 P.M.: We form again for storming in the trenches,

quietly and unostentatiously. Arrangement the same as before, except that Abdullah has two more battalions—those sent by the Mushir, which have meanwhile arrived in the vineyards.

*Force Attacking Kavanlik Tabiya in the Afternoon
of September 12.*

(Compare Table and Diagram on pages 261 and 262.)

Commander : Colonel Tewfik Bey.

Second : Colonel Hairi Bey.

A. Three battalions : Lieut.-Colonel Mehemed Nazif Bey.

B. One battalion.

C. Seven battalions : Lieut.-Colonel Abdullah Bey.

D. Two and a half battalions : Lieut.-Colonel Riza Bey.

E. Two squadrons regular cavalry, Saloniki auxiliaries, and Circassians.

Total : Thirteen and a half battalions and two squadrons, say 5,500 men.

3 P.M. : A violent hail of shells is directed on Kavanlik from Milas, Talahat, Tahir, Omer Tabiyas, and headquarters. Sharp rain, light wind ; atmosphere clear, and view good.

3.10 P.M. : Rifle-fire north of Kavanlik ; the attack has commenced on that side. We are instructed to keep quiet, so as to deceive the enemy.

3.15 P.M. : Troops (Abdullah's seven battalions) emerge from the vineyards, preceded by skirmishers. Heavy firing.

3.20 P.M. : Our bugles sound 'Advance.' We leave trenches and make in a straight line for Kavanlik, at a moderate pace, so as to give our skirmishers time to fire, which they do with coolness and regularity.

This time our advance is executed with perfect order and steadiness. There are no receding movements, only two short halts, when all save officers lie down and fire from behind the corpses' friendly shelter. We arrive at the first trench, deserted by the enemy, where we settle, and whence

we deliver quickfire. The Russians' fire against us is weak ; the majority of their forces are directed against Abdullah's battalions. We start after a few minutes' breathing time, and occupy second trench without having come to close quarters. Again the roofs are crowded with enthusiastic compatriots. We hear impetuous cries of ' Allah ' which have the true victorious ring. I order ' Cease firing,' so as to give the powder-smoke time to clear away ; when the view is unimpaired we see the Turks in the north-west climbing the parapet of the redoubt. There is now no holding the men : everybody rises and rushes for the scene of conflict as fast as their legs will carry them. Smart encounter in the last trench with few remaining Russians, who succumb to our bayonets. We scale the parapet, and see the Turks in occupation of the redoubt. The Russians have made their way out by the south-east corner, whence they gain the Krishin road and the vineyards. Troops wildly enthusiastic, and eager for further fighting. I am just in time to stop some men butchering wounded enemies. One who will not obey will bear the scar of the sword-cut I gave him across the face to the end of his days. A grateful look in the tearful eyes of the maimed opponents is my reward. We find our own two guns and three of the enemy's ; three the Russians have taken with them, dragging them out by hand. The confusion in the redoubt is indescribable : the slaughter has been terrible ; the place looks like a shambles ; the soil is a quagmire, of which blood is the predominating liquid element ; even the terrific deluge which Heaven is sending cannot efface the ponds and rivers of human blood. Four companies start without orders for Issa Tabiya, which is meanwhile attacked by Mehemed Nazif's three battalions. Seeing this, other troops follow ; I join these with my company, but the major and three companies of my battalion remain behind in Kavanlik. I learnt later that Tewfik Bey had stopped them, seeing the Russians already evacuating Issa Tabiya. When we (that is, my company and five or six others belonging to as many battalions, for the troops have become hopelessly mixed in

Kavanlik) arrive in Issa Tabiya, the four companies which have started in the first instance and some of Mehemed Nazif's force are already in possession, having taken the redoubt without having come to close quarters. But now Cossacks trot forward to cover the retreat of the infantry; a few squadrons of regular cavalry and Salonikis, wisely stationed by Mehemed Nazif on the spot where the Krishin road enters Plevna, and retained in view of this emergency, gallop up. There is a smart encounter; several companies follow the Turkish horsemen; the Cossacks turn back, and disappear in the direction of the Lovdcha road.

The Russians retreated along the Krishin road and through the vineyards; half a mile south of Issa they turned to the left and gained the Lovdcha road, along which they proceeded to Brestovitz; here they bivouacked for the night.

My company lost only three men in the second assault, my battalion fifteen. The total loss to the attacking force was 300. Riza Bey had been wounded.

By five all is over, and the third and greatest battle of Plevna has ended, for the Russians, in a total failure. For six weeks they have prepared for the storming; they have hurled every available man against Osman's stronghold; they have ushered in the attack by four days' shelling of unprecedented violence; they have called together their most accredited leaders (Sotow, Krylow, Imeretinski, Skobeleff; Leontieff and Loschkareff for the cavalry); their Czar, their Commander-in-Chief (Grand Duke Nicholas), the Prince of Roumania, the German Military Attaché (General von Werder), and many diplomatic, political, and military grandees have inspired the troops by their presence—and all they have gained in exchange for the sacrifice of 20,000 men is one small redoubt, of no strategical value, the possession of which did them subsequently more harm than good. And this one dubious success is due principally to the Roumanians, a fact which must have been a galling reflection to the Russian commanders.⁹⁷

These are the broad features of the battle :—

The enemy had attacked the Turkish lines at three points : his right wing (Ninth Corps and three Roumanian divisions : General Krüdener), Kanli Tabiya in the north-east ; his centre (Fourth Corps : General Krylow), Omer Tabiya in the south-east ; his left wing (detachment of General Skobelev), the Krishin redoubts in the south-west. The attack had been fixed for 3 p.m. on the 11th, but in the centre two regiments started two hours too early.

Kanli Tabiya had successfully withstood three onslaughts ; the fourth, at 7 p.m. on the 11th, succeeded. Various attempts were made during the 12th to recover the lost redoubt, one in the evening, on a large scale ; but they collapsed, and finally we left the enemy in possession of this point.

The centre attack had failed as thoroughly as attack can fail. Never were troops better beaten than the Russian centre on September 11, 1877.

In the south, Skobelev's impetuosity, science, personal bravery, and astounding, almost uncanny, influence over the men had been of no avail against the Krishin redoubts. He pushed forward and took the Plevna works, thus driving the acute angle of a triangular-shaped wedge into the Turkish position, dividing it into two disconnected parts. He was dislodged on the 12th.

During the battle the Russian-Roumanian cavalry ⁹⁸ had taken possession of the Orkanyé road, which they held up to September 24, when the road was forced by Ahmed Hifzi's column.

On the 13th and 14th the Russians retreated behind Radishevo in the centre, to Bogot in the south, whilst the right wing retained Kanli Tabiya, and was thus within 300 yards of the Turkish lines.

The Turks had lost 5,000 killed and *hors de combat*. The Russian-Roumanian losses are variously stated ; I have seen estimates as high as 25,000, as low as 16,000. I presume the truth lies between the two extremes, say 20,000

(15,000 Russians and 5,000 Roumanians) in killed and wounded, of which, roughly, 5,000 in the (Russian) right wing, 6,000 in the centre, 8,000 in Skobelev's detachment (out of 20,000, or 40 per cent.), and 1,000 in artillery, cavalry, and reserves. We had taken 2,000 wounded and a few hundred unwounded prisoners. Four hundred of our men were, and remained, missing. There were 7,000 corpses on the battle-field. The total loss was thus at least 25,000, or one-fifth of the force engaged. The Russian *loss* amounted to two-thirds of the Turkish *force*, an occurrence without precedent. We had lost two guns in Kanli Tabiya and won three in Kavanlik.

Osman could not turn his victory to advantage. His cavalry force was far too small to follow up the action in the orthodox manner; the men were dead-beat, soaked, in rags; the army was in a state of indescribable confusion; he was cut off from his supplies; he was left without support from the Council of War and the other armies. But he had the gratification of having given the arch-enemy of his country such a beating as he had not had since the Great Frederick routed him at Zorndorf in 1758.

Of the Turkish superior officers the following were killed: Lieut.-Colonels Ali Riza Bey, Ibrahim Bey. Wounded: General of Division Hassan Sabri Pasha; Generals of Brigade Rifa'at Pasha, Kara Ali Pasha, Emin Pasha; Colonels Hairi Bey, Omer Bey, Hafouz Bey; Lieut.-Colonel Riza Bey.

It is difficult to mention men who distinguished themselves without running the risk of omitting equally deserving names. Atouf Pasha and Omer Bey, for their successful defence of the centre; Emin Pasha and Rifa'at Pasha, who fell at the head of their charging battalions; Abdullah Bey, Mehemed Nazif Bey, Riza Bey, Hairi Bey, for their shares in the onslaughts on the lost redoubts; Adil Pasha, for his clever dispositions on the left wing; Suleiman Bey, for his vigilance in the far north (Opanetz), through which an attack in this quarter was prevented; Hafouz Bey, for his

gallant stand in Bash Tabiya ; Ahmed Pasha, for his unremitting activity as commander of artillery ; Osman Bey, the cavalry leader, for having done his utmost with the small force at his command—to all these honour is due. The hero of the 12th was, undoubtedly, Tewfik Bey, the leader of the attack which decided the battle and crowned the tottering banner of the Crescent once more with the laurels of victory, perhaps—who knows?—for the last time in the records of history. He was promoted to brigadier's rank, and was ever afterwards popular with the troops.

But without wishing to detract from the credit due to Tewfik, who was, after all, the man who won the Turks their victory, in my opinion, the greatest hero of all during those awful days was Colonel Yunuz Bey, commander of the Krishin redoubts. Baghlarbashi was taken out of his hands early, on account of the distance which divided this work from the others ; Milas, Talahat, and Yunuz Tabiyas he held for six days, with seven battalions⁹⁹ and six guns, against a Skobelev with twenty battalions and ninety guns.

The names of Tewfik and Yunuz were mentioned in a general order read out during parade two or three days after the battle.

The excitement of the troops when they knew themselves to be victors was indescribable. Men embraced, wept, danced about like maniacs with delight, worshipped the great leader as if he were another Prophet, knelt down in whole companies to offer up heartfelt prayers of gratitude to Him who alone gives victory. I saw one poor fellow, doubled up, with abdomen torn open, turn round as he writhed on the ground and assume painfully the orthodox attitude for devotion. He died in this posture, proudly conscious that heaven's gates had opened wide for him.

Indomitable in his resolution, unshaken in his moral strength, unfaltering in carrying out his purport, Osman, by this victory, has left a brilliant mark upon the century's history. When despair was blackest the divine light of hope burnt still within him—that light which, in the breast

of a brave man, only death can extinguish. He refused to be beaten ; boldly he staked his last battalions, and won the game. In contrast to the petty heart-burnings and littlenesses of the Russian leaders (Skobelev excepted) he stands out giantlike in his moral grandeur. *Speravi, oravi, vici* (to paraphrase Julius Cæsar), might have been his motto ; for he was known to be intensely devout.

What a lesson to draw from the holocaust of those days ! Be your battle-field on the historic plains of a Gravelotte or a Plevna, where a new era is born amid such labour and travail as the world has never witnessed, or be it within the secrecy of your own heart, where no eyes but God's can witness it—decline, absolutely decline to be beaten, and you will come out a victor !

From people living in England, France, and Germany in 1877, and from journals consulted, I have learnt that public excitement in Europe was intense. Men could hardly believe that a handful of Turks should have beaten the mighty Russian hordes ; a new star had arisen on the horizon of history, and Osman's name was in everybody's mouth. In England especially he was considered the man of the hour, and if he had visited this island in 1878, such a reception would have been given to him as would have made a Blücher stare. For weeks after the battle, when the road was again open, letters of congratulation, particularly from Austria and England, poured into the camp. The Sultan bestowed upon Osman the title Ghazi (the Victorious).

My company had lost twenty-five in killed and disabled ; but this I only ascertained later, as on the evening of the 12th quite sixty men were missing, not counting Lieutenant Seymour's squad. Half of the men I had in my ranks were strangers. The losses of the battalion in dead and wounded amounted to eighty. Tereb, exhausted from loss of blood, went to an ambulance, where he stayed a week ; Bakal recovered without surgical aid. Azif and myself were unwounded.

Our kol aghassi had recovered from the wound received on July 20, and had joined us in the beginning of September. To everybody's satisfaction he was with us only a few days, being transferred to another battalion which had lost both major and kol aghassi. He was again wounded on the 11th, but not badly.

Our bash chawush had stayed in the Janik Bair redoubt when we started for the south on the 11th, ostensibly to attend to the ammunition-supply, in reality from motives of fear. A shell killed him as he was on his way from the redoubt to the rear magazines. 'Good riddance,' said we. Bakal was promoted to bash chawush rank, to everybody's sincere joy. He continued, however, to remain in my company as leader of my former squad, on account of the scarcity of officers—for which providential occurrence I was truly grateful. Thus this wonderful man fulfilled three functions—only surviving sergeant to the company, bash chawush to the battalion, acting lieutenant to a squad—not only well and thoroughly, but apparently without an effort.

Our major had hurt his ankle in the last charge, when his horse had been shot under him. He recovered without ambulance aid.

The battle was over, but so much remained to be done that refreshment and rest seemed to be ages distant. To the credit of the Turks be it said that their first care was for the wounded. They did not get drunk, as the Russians do when they have been victorious, but set to work with as much method as the confusion would allow to collect and attend to the bleeding and maimed victims. We had no time to think of the dead; as a matter of fact, corpses were still unburied a week after the battle, when the sight of vultures and carrion crows disputing the possession of rotting humanity with the vagrant dogs would have made even an emperor have pangs of remorse.

The fields around Kavanlik, Issa, and Baghlarbashi Tabiyas presented an aspect never to be forgotten. The slush was positively pink; the meadows and fields were

covered with dead and dying, in many places piled up in grotesque heaps. In Issa parapets had been built with dead men.

Those who gave signs of life, friend and foe alike, were got into the redoubt with all possible speed ; when the first-aid had been given and the bleeding stopped they were conveyed into Plevna, mostly carried by hand, as vehicular accommodation was not one-tenth of what would have been sufficient.¹⁰⁰ Half of my company assisted in this work. Of the rest I formed a cooking-party, there being a store of maize and rice in the redoubt ; an outpost in the vineyards, to acquaint us of any attempted return on the enemy's part ; a gang for conveying water from the brook to the redoubt, and a party for helping to repair the damaged works. Fatigue had vanished ; the glorious sensation of victory neutralised exhaustion.

Being separated from my major and my battalion, I was left without instructions, and acted on my own responsibility.

When, at eight, the various parties and gangs had returned from their labours, I held muster, weeded out strangers (save those belonging to Adil's division, which we took with us when we marched back to Janik Bair redoubt), and placed these under Lieutenant Azif, instructing him to deliver them to their respective redoubts. This was done, not from necessity, but from reasons of humanity : it saved the men from being accused of cowardice or desertion. With the rest of my company I sat down to a meal of rice and porridge. The rain had ceased, but the night was very dark ; large bonfires burnt in the redoubt. As the following four days were moderately fine, with only occasional brief showers, it seemed as if heaven had reserved its deluge for the battle. On the 16th rain set in with renewed vigour, and lasted with rare interruptions for a month, varied after October 7 by frost and snow.

I ought to have returned to Kavanlik and rejoined my battalion ; but I thought that we should fare better if I remained independent. My major afterwards praised me

for this, as it had saved him trouble, the leaders of his other companies having been killed or wounded.

The confusion in Issa Tabiya baffles description : it took three to four hours to get something faintly approaching order into this seething mass of men belonging to six or eight battalions. There was not a whole battalion in the place, and very few entire companies. My company was better in hand than any in the redoubt. The temporary commander appointed by Tewfik (I think it was Hairi Bey) worked strenuously. He left me alone, and I received not a single order from him ; perhaps, as I flattered myself was probably the case, he had been told that ' Sir Englishman ' could be relied upon to attend to his business ; but let the reader put this down to my youthful conceit.

At nine, when we had finished eating and drinking, and had dried and warmed ourselves by the fire, I asked a superior officer for instructions, and received orders to start immediately for the Janik Bair, the left wing being dangerously undermanned, and the right so crowded as to render order and discipline well-nigh impossible, comfort wholly so. I assembled the sad remnants of my company. The men looked like vagabonds, dirty beyond recognition, encased from head to foot in crusts of dried mud, many in tatters which would barely hold together. Numbers had ' borrowed ' boots, trousers, jackets from corpses. Exclusive of twenty strangers whom we took with us, I had fifty men left ; but Seymour's squad we encountered later, and forty men came into our redoubt next day, most of them having either certificates or witnesses to prove that they had fought elsewhere. The average strength of the company during September was 120.

We marched through Plevna. Some shells had struck the place, but the damage was trifling. The town presented an aspect which is beyond my descriptive powers.

The streets are streets no longer, but brooks and rivers ; where there is a remnant of terra firma (save the mark !) it has the consistency of butter. Each tree sends down insolent

little showers of its own when the wind moves it ; from the roofs thin waterspouts innumerable drench us, who have just dried ourselves, and make me utter impious words, exemplary Christian as I am. The block at the street-corners has been recalled to me by the scene in the thoroughfares of the city of London on busy week-day mornings, minus the police, making the confusion worse confounded. Strings of carts with groaning men—of whom many are disfigured by dirt, blood, wounds, beyond the semblance of humanity, who are piled like butchers' carcasses upon reeking and steaming straw—are crossed by other trains of vehicles with similar cargoes ; huge fires at important crossings dispel the blackness of a particularly dark night by vacillating patches of yellow brilliancy, with flickering shadows chasing each other like ghosts along the house-fronts, making the trees appear as if animated by goblins. The uncertain light of the flames adds to the fierceness of tawny Tartar countenances, sets hideous demons at work on the stolid surface of Muscovite physiognomies, suggests grotesque changes of features, turning sound men to devils, and sick men, sometimes to angels, sometimes to the brute creations of a delirium-heated brain. What a babel of tongues !—men praying, lamenting, cursing their rulers for having laid them low, in Russian, Roumanian, Turkish, Arabic, Circassian ; drivers loudly clamouring for a passage, inquiring their way or destination, exchanging abuse and blows with those who obstruct their progress ; snatches of Bulgarian, French, unknown dialects—the guttural tones of a German surgeon who swears at himself, as he vainly tries to get order into this chaos ; the shrill notes of an English doctor, who apostrophises, to a colleague across the road, that fool of a driver who has brought him corpses instead of wounded men. Before every ambulance (there were then a hundred in Plevna, not counting the public hospital and the big establishments in mosques and municipal buildings) a queue of carts is waiting to unload ; a fire to light the ghastly labours ; a banner, with red Crescent, limp and wet on its pole ; a perspiring, overworked, dead-

beat superintendent or surgeon refuses to take in any more stock for his thriving trade. Here is a crowd of jubilant Turkish, there a group of crestfallen and trembling Bulgarian, inhabitants. What a change for the latter—yesterday insolent and triumphant, to-day in the deepest abyss of the most ignominious fear! Files of soldiers—companies, battalions—come from all sides, on the way back to their redoubts; two or three squadrons of cavalry trot westward to assist the Vid bridge guard; a battery gallops to some suddenly discovered exposed point. The guns splash us from head to foot; on the soft clay the usual thunder of the wheels is strangely absent, so that they pass us well-nigh in silence, looking like the dissolving views of a magic-lantern, emerging from the darkness and plunging into it with a speed and a vehemence such as only gun-drivers can get out of their vehicles. Everybody has to step out of the way. A gun collides with a cart and upsets it; with a crash, a shriek, a thud, the human cargo rolls into the slush, and the next gun goes right through the sprawling heap of maimed mankind. It does not much matter: only a few wounded men wounded a little more. Where they have fallen there is a purple pool; when we pass the spot a minute later the men's heavy tread splashes our faces with red specks. We come to a street where they have not lighted a fire, and where the confusion is worse in the impenetrable darkness. We are hailed, and find our progress impeded until an obliging resident brings a lamp, and we discover that we have encountered a small body of prisoners, the Roumanians, being rebels, with hands tied behind them, the Russians, being honest enemies, unbound. Next we come to an important crossing where there are two huge fires, and where a sight greets us at which my men give a shout of joy: half a dozen Bulgarians dangling from gallows improvised in front of their own doors—like bundles of limp rags, with sullen, ashy faces and vacant eyes—in atonement for acts of treachery. At the feet of one is a weeping woman—a veritable *mater dolorosa*; near another are children crunching apples, and wondering why their father looks so

funny. In the same street women bring us hot coffee and rice cakes, which we consume in view of the gallows, some men leaning against the posts and playing at shuttlecock with the culprits' legs. The foot of one hits me in the face, and the man who has made the thrust apologises: 'I meant to hit Murad over there, sir; but I declare the fellow has got a twist in his knee, so that one cannot throw straight.' To illustrate this he raises the dead man's leg and aims at his companion, who is holding out his hands, grinning like the wicket-keeper at a diabolical game of cricket; and, true enough, the foot describes an arc and gives a thumping knock in the centre of a corporal's capacious back. The latter turns round with a face so scared that we all burst out into a merry laugh; and this rouses me from what as a nightmare would be indescribably hideous, but what as stern reality simply baffles the illustrative powers of all the adjectives found in the dictionary. I forbid sternly the continuation of such wantonness, and my men become suddenly sober—we have all been out of our senses, after thirty hours of continual slaughter and unequalled horrors. I rub my eyes. Surely this has been a dream; surely this cannot be God's fair earth, on the surface of which I have lived such a happy life, which has brought forth those I love so well—my father, my dear mother, my pretty sisters, that little girl I have left behind in the Far West? Fatigue overcomes me, and I dream, with open eyes, that I have been killed in battle, and that this is the hell to which God has consigned me—until Bakal calls me to myself by saying, 'Do not fret, sir; these scenes are not of your doing, and you are not responsible for them.' And for once in a while the sergeant turns prophet. 'To him who is responsible,' he says, indicating the direction of the Russian headquarters with a solemn gesture, 'a tremendous punishment will be dealt out.' Let not the reader think that I am romancing. It is the sober truth that Alexander II.'s awful end was prophesied to me by Sergeant Bakal, in the streets of Plevna, on September 12, 1877, an hour and a half before midnight. A hand gently

laid upon my arm rouses me from the reverie into which the sergeant's words and manner have plunged me. I turn round, and behold a veiled girl, who gives me a packet of tobacco, another of cigarettes, and a flask of brandy, whispers, 'Stolen from the ambulance for your dear sake,' and vanishes, swiftly and noiselessly, like a benignant messenger returning to the happier regions whence she came. I take a goodly sip, light a cigarette, shake myself, and am a man again. I give the order to proceed, and, thank God! we are clear of the town.

Plevna is one and a half miles long from south to north, and it had taken us two hours to pass through it. At eleven, just after we had crossed the Grivitza bridge, north of the town, and were marching into the darkness, we heard the tramp of men, and were hailed in Turkish. Our foremost man flashed the light of his lantern in search of the intruders, and the first countenance which the white patch revealed to me, like a bold sketch set in a huge black frame, belonged to Jack Seymour, safe and sound, without a scratch or hurt on him—'except, old fellow, an unholy lust for a drop of something strong,' which craving was immediately relieved.

After the collapse of the attack at dusk on the 11th he had found himself with his squad in Plevna. During the night he had formed the guard at one of the street-outlets, and had cheerfully assisted in meting out condign punishment to some of the Christians who had fired the haystacks—a stroke of diabolical treachery serving a fourfold purpose: to show the enemy what we were doing, to fix a target for his gunners, to destroy our stores, to create a panic in town, and thus facilitate invasion, in which latter hope the perpetrators were disappointed. In the morning he had taken part in Tahir's abortive attempt to recover Kavanlik; in the afternoon his men had been the first to climb the parapet. After the storming he was sent back to town, to prevent outbreaks among the populace.

At midnight, half-dead with fatigue, we reached our redoubt, where excellent preparations, made by Adil's com-

mand, greeted us : fires, meat boiling in the coppers, hot coffee. During our absence the stores and sleeping-chambers had been drained and covered with fresh hides and skins, so that our dwelling-place was tolerably dry and comfortable. Half an hour later the main body of the battalion arrived. We ate, drank, compared notes, gave a passing word of remembrance to missing friends, and then turned in and slept, after having been on our legs for forty hours, the sleep of the just and the victorious, undressed (by permission), and in a perfect luxury of leisure ; for no trench, outpost, or sentry duty was allotted to my battalion. And thus ended my personal share in the biggest and bloodiest battle of the war, which in point of number of casualties ranks fourth since Waterloo, ¹⁰¹ in point of proportion (20 per cent.) probably first.

Before finishing with the third battle of Plevna I must draw attention to that feature of the Turkish tactics which stamped the war of 1877 with a character of its own, a feature evident in all actions in which I took part, in none more than in the one under discussion : I refer to the quick-fire of the Turkish infantry, of such power, duration, and effect as had never before been dreamt of. General Todleben wrote later : ‘ Such a shower of lead as that with which the Turks hail our troops has never before been employed as a mode of warfare by any European army.’ It was more instinct, experience, silent consent, and confidence in their weapons, than training or formulated rules, which induced the Turkish foot-soldiers to adopt this mode of fighting. I had witnessed quickfire drill in Widdin ; but I venture to say that it was not until after the first battle that the officers became really conscious of the terrific power of long-sustained quick-fire. Our orders were, briefly, as follows : ‘ As soon as you know or suppose the enemy to be within range of your rifles, cover the space presumably occupied by him, or presumably to be traversed by him, with quickfire, independent of distance, duration, difficulty of aim, probability of hitting, and consumption of cartridges.’ The awful effect upon the opponent

of this rule, if carried out as literally and as much *con amore* as it was by the Turks, is apparent in the Russian losses, and in the fact that throughout the Plevna campaign the Russian attacks, with few and unimportant exceptions, collapsed, numerical superiority notwithstanding. The Turkish consumption of cartridges was in proportion. On the 11th and 12th September it reached in Bash, Kanli, Omer, Issa, Kavanlik Tabiyas and the Krishin redoubts, 300 per man per day; in Baghlarbashi, some of the men had exhausted their complement of 500 cartridges in six hours' fighting. To carry out this mode of warfare the organisation of the cartridge-supply must be as perfect as it was in Plevna camp. Not only had we an immense central stock, housed in a mosque, which was replenished from Orkanyé at regular intervals, but each redoubt had its own reserve store, each battalion its mobile stock, each trench its numerous boxes placed in convenient positions for the men to help themselves freely. There was a service of packhorses, by means of which the stock of any redoubt or battalion could be replenished from the central store at a moment's notice. These arrangements worked without a hitch, even in the confusion of a partly unsuccessful general engagement.

Quickfire, such as that of the Turkish infantry, was in 1877 unexampled, and its moral and actual effect upon the enemy was terrific; but whether this mode of warfare could be successfully employed by a French or German army of 200,000 men on the offensive is not for me to say. With us—30,000 men, stationary, entrenched, on the defensive—the results were magnificent, appalling for the foe.

The behaviour of the Turks in the third battle of Plevna shows what heights the sons of a proud and devout nation can rise to when they are inspired by patriotism, that noblest of virtues, when they are facing a common danger, in front of the invader, strong in that absence of dissent which is born of discipline, raised by a beloved leader to his own level of moral grandeur, *conscious of fighting for a righteous cause, certain that Paradise is waiting for them should they fall.*

CHAPTER XI

PREPARING FOR THE INVESTMENT

SEPTEMBER 13 TO OCTOBER 24, 1877

ON the morning of September 13 my company was ordered to the centre, where we assisted in burying the dead in front of Omer Tabiya. A few hours' armistice had been concluded for the purpose.

A hundred Bulgarians from Plevna were compelled to help in digging, as a punishment for the outrages committed by them during the battle; they were supervised by soldiers with loaded rifles, who had been instructed to shoot down anyone attempting to escape. No consideration was shown to lazy or obstinate men; generally the butt-end of a rifle persuaded them effectually that it would be wise to accomplish the task set them.

The picking-up of their wounded in the maize-fields between Radishevo and Omer Tabiya must have been a difficult matter to the Russians; many maimed men were left for three or four days in the corn before being discovered. The slaughter in this quarter had been frightful.

The dead were buried in holes containing 50 to 100 each, the officers in separate places, Turks and Russians apart. Bulgarian popes and our own priests recited a few pious words. Stakes, branches of trees, or demolished rifles marked the graves.

I kept an exact account of the numbers interred, and of the names and battalions of the Turkish victims, so far as these could be ascertained. Money, valuables, documents, arms, cartridges, water-bottles, were taken from the corpses

and delivered to officers appointed for that purpose; also boots and uniforms, if in good condition.

We were supplied with dinner from Omer Tabiya, where gangs were repairing the damaged works. In the afternoon another company relieved us, and we escorted to town a train of carts with rifles, bayonets, fezes, boots, and so forth. The day was tolerably fine.

In the neighbourhood of Bash and Kanli Tabiyas the negotiations with the object of determining a line of demarcation had failed, in consequence of which many bodies were here left unburied for a week. They infected the air and caused illness. Some were never interred, and became skeletons, thanks to the voracity of dogs and birds.

We returned to our redoubt towards dusk, and had nothing more to do for the rest of the day. There was no shelling on the 13th.

At night I accompanied my major and two officers from Adil's staff on a round of outpost inspection, not because it was necessary, but because I wanted a walk and a smoke; for a wonder, it did not rain. Azif and three other lieutenants were with us—eight all told.

We came, at 10.30, to an advanced post where information had just arrived from a sentry that the noise of ill-greased cart-wheels, the braying of a donkey, and subdued conversation had been heard, and flashes of lanterns had been seen, a quarter of a mile away. Our informant estimated the number of carts at three or four, of men at twenty, the direction north-east, towards Verbitza.

'They are marauders,' said everybody; the neighbourhood had been swarming with these gentry ever since the second battle. Enemies they could not be: firstly, because Russians and Roumanians did not employ asses; and secondly, because there was no reason for them to execute a stealthy nocturnal journey in that direction. If they were enemies, the sounds could only betoken preparations for a surprise attack, and we should be deserving of credit in unmasking the enemy's intention.

We eight officers, accompanied by four foot-soldiers, a corporal, two Circassians from the outpost, and three of our vagrant but self-attached dogs (of so many crossings that they had lost all characteristics of species and were much alike, as the canine pariahs of the Orient always are), proceeded in the direction indicated with secrecy and despatch. When, after ten minutes' tramp along slippery field-paths, we halted, the creaking cart-wheels could be distinctly heard, 200 yards to our right, to judge by the sound. The night was dark, and the view limited in this hilly district. We reached a mound with a tree on the top; a man climbed the latter, and reported seeing the flashes of lanterns on a path leading to Verbitza, which village lay two miles to the north-east, and was occupied by the Roumanians. Guided by the Circassians, who knew the neighbourhood, we cut off the nocturnal wanderers' journey by getting across the path before them, and waited behind the hedges. The dogs entered with zest into the fun of the thing, and kept perfectly quiet. At last the *cortège* arrived; from what little we could see we found our suspicions confirmed; in any case, the travellers were not soldiers. When they came to the spot where we lay hidden we suddenly jumped out upon them, and had the lot in our possession without firing a shot. There were three carts, two drawn by donkeys, one by dogs; a hasty glance showed them to contain rifles and raiment. After the ten men and three women had been bound we marched back to the outpost. Here the carts were inspected by the light of the fire, and found to contain the spoil of battle-fields; the creatures must have stripped the bodies, for bloodstained undergarments, mostly of fine quality, belonging to officers, formed half of the stock. That these hyænas do not strip dead men only is clear.

The prisoners, who represented an awful collection of the most hideous, brutal, and debased countenances, were marched to the redoubt and searched. Their clothes—in rags and horribly dirty—were found to contain rings, watches, chains, pendants, money of many nationalities, bank-notes,

pocket-books, documents. The filthy and tattered raiment of the women baffled description, as did the tigerish ferocity of their faces and gestures and their vile language; they were quite inhuman in aspect and behaviour, and it is a libel on the brute creation to call them 'beasts.'

The prisoners were interrogated, but all refused stubbornly to give information, with one exception. This was a young Bulgarian, the only tolerably decent-looking member of the party, who told us all we required to know, in the hope of being let off. Only one of the gang was a Turk; the others were gipsies, Hungarians, Servians, Roumanian Jews, and Bulgarians. Of the women, two were gipsies and one a Slavonian.

They were told that they would be hung in the morning. Their firmness forsook them, and they began to howl, whine, screech and swear; only the Turk was silent and unmoved, and his dignified behaviour contrasted favourably with the ignominious fear of death betrayed by the others. The noise brought the colonel and many officers to the spot, among them Jack, picturesquely attired in a petticoat and a Cossack hat. Two companies turned out, mistaking the turmoil for an alarm. The prisoners, availing themselves of the momentary confusion and the darkness, made an attempt at escape, but were recaptured. The colonel now commanded their immediate execution, and the thirteen hyænas of the battle-field were strung up in a row. I shall not harrow the reader's feelings by a description of this awful scene, one of the worst I have witnessed in a war exceptionally rich in horrors. Their punishment was well deserved, for these creatures used to strip the wounded to the skin, cut off the fingers of living men to obtain their rings, and tear off parts of their ears to get the earrings.

The next day (September 14) passed without incident and without work, save the redoubt routine.

On the 15th the list of the casualties which the battalion had incurred was complete, numbers of stragglers having come in during the two days after the battle, and a clean copy was

sent to headquarters. Most of the stragglers had either witnesses or certificates to prove that they had fought elsewhere. Those who had not were charged with desertion and cowardice, but were, I believe, after a cursory investigation, acquitted. After a successful action many sins are forgiven. Two men of my company remained missing. On this day it became known in camp that the Orkanyé-Plevna wire had been cut. The enemy's cavalry was holding the Orkanyé road; which fact caused us some anxiety, more so than the interruptions of communication with Rahova, Lom Palankah, and Widdin; for from these places—all undermanned, and provisioned only for their own garrisons—we had no help to expect, whilst the concentration of a strong reinforcement column and the collection of large stores in Orkanyé had commenced long before the third battle. The rations were reduced, and strict economy in every commodity was enjoined. We were thus cut off from the world; but the troops' confidence in their leader was such that they felt convinced that he would not suffer this state of things to continue for long; in which expectation they were not disappointed. The soldiers were in good spirits; *morale* and discipline were excellent. On the other hand, it is admitted that the Russian troops were depressed and demoralised up to the time that Todleben's reputation and activity induced them to recover confidence.

From September 14 to the end of the campaign shells were exchanged almost daily between the two camps; but during September and October there was little night firing.

The health of Plevna camp gave cause for anxiety: dysentery increased alarmingly, and there were cases of cholera and typhoid fever.

On September 16 rain set in anew. It grew chilly, and the winds (mostly north) were high. Dirty weather continued without interruption for a month, and was the cause of exquisite misery.

On the 17th a curious rumour spread in camp: that England had declared war against Russia, and that two British divisions were already on the road from Constantinople for

the relief of Plevna. For some hours we were in a state of the greatest excitement, but were soon undeceived. Another rumour reported that Osman contemplated evacuating Plevna for Lukovitza and Orkanyé.

On the 18th the Roumanians attacked Bash Tabiya from Kanli Tabiya. My battalion was sent to the former, but arrived when the enemy had already retreated. The onslaught had been furious and the resistance desperate. The affair cost the Turks 100, the Roumanians 500, in killed and wounded. The dead were mixed with the corpses remaining from the third battle, which attracted masses of birds, and proved of horrible interest to the dogs.

My battalion was ordered to occupy the trenches, to give those troops who had taken part in the fray time to recover. The stench emitted by the corpse-studded space between the two redoubts was horrible. We were within 100 yards of the enemy's foremost posts. I foolishly climbed the bank of the trench, and received a shot in the leg. As it was a spent bullet, it could not have proceeded from the trenches of Kanli Tabiya. The ball—or, to be exact, shreds of my clothing with the bullet on the top of them—stuck in the flesh, just below the surface, and caused little inconvenience or pain. When the surgeon came round he removed the intruders with one dexterous knife-cut, washed the wound, and bound it up. It bled freely, but not for long. An hour later I was seized with violent pains and spasms in the stomach, accompanied by diarrhœa. The doctor pronounced the dreaded words, 'itch agrisi' (dysentery); I was packed on a cart with wounded, being quite helpless and prostrate, and in horrible agonies, and was sent to Plevna. As I was in a stupor during the journey, all consciousness of its tortures was spared to me.

I had freely partaken of fruit in the morning, in defiance of Bakal's warning; this, with the infected air and the excitement caused by the wound had, I presume, brought on the attack.

On my arrival in town I was sent to a fever hospital established in a mosque, in which were 200 patients. The

few doctors—among them a German—who were available for this work, and who had also ambulances to attend to, did their best, assisted by convalescent soldiers and civilians. Nevertheless, my sojourn in this place was a terrible experience—one I do not care to recall. Quinine, laudanum, and drugs generally ran short; for the Russian cavalry had intercepted a convoy with these commodities. There was hardly any brandy in camp; food was the reverse of plentiful, and was given insufficiently salted, the enemy having captured nine waggon-loads of salt, sugar, and spices. The scarcity of salt lasted, more or less, up to the end of the campaign, and was the worst feature of the privations we had to undergo. The uselessness of money was brought home to me in those days; secretly I paid twenty-five piastres (4s. 8d.) for a few pinches of salt; later, five sovereigns would not have purchased an ounce. Many patients died from want of strengthening food who would have recovered under ordinary circumstances.

Add to the hardships I have mentioned a cold building, a damp and infected atmosphere (for, in spite of strenuous efforts and strict supervision, cleanliness could not always be enforced with this mass of diarrhœa-stricken men), rough beds of skins, matting, a blanket, a handful of straw, and a few rags on the stone floor; a company of prostrate fellow-sufferers, and the gloomy outlook generally, despite the late victory, with, in my case, both a wound and a disease to torment me, and you may, with a vivid imagination, form a notion of the miseries I underwent.

The wounded of the third battle were still in Plevna: owing to the interruption of the communication with Orkanyé they could not be sent to the latter place, as had been done after the previous actions. The surgeon-in-chief, Hassib Bey, visited us daily, and altogether the medical men did their utmost; that things were, nevertheless, execrable, was not their fault.

There were quacks and sorcerers in the town whom the common soldiers, notably those hailing from Asia, revered

and trusted; their hocus-pocus was tolerated, but they were not allowed to prescribe or administer. Also, the priests pretended to effect faith-cures and miracles.

Among the patients were several Russians and Roumanians, fever-stricken prisoners from the third battle, who were housed in a separate corner and were treated with great kindness.

My money purchased many commodities, at exorbitant rates—for instance, ten piastres (1s. 10*d.*), a spoonful of brandy—and a girl-friend in town sent me daily luxuries by means of a bribed messenger, such as broth, port wine, eggs, wheatmeal cakes. With these advantages my strong constitution overcame the disease speedily; the wound was healing satisfactorily and gave no trouble, and on the fourth day (September 23) I was sufficiently well to get up—against orders—and crawl out by stealth in the afternoon, being very feeble and low in my system, with the intention of trying to obtain a conveyance to the redoubt; for even my former sleeping-quarters, rough and comfortless as they were, particularly in wet weather, seemed to me a paradise compared to that purgatory of pain-convulsed, fever-stricken patients, with its stench, its groans of men sick of life in their misery, its fresh corpses every day.

When I came to the konak in the centre of the town, supported by a stick which a kind-hearted labourer had cut for me in his garden, some officers who had duties in connection with the administration of stores took compassion upon my evident weakness, and gave me part of their dinner, each contributing a mite and helping to make up a goodly meal. Hardly had we finished when there was a commotion outside, and we learnt that the column from Orkanyé, aided by the troops which the Mushir had sent to meet it, had forced the enemy's lines and was approaching Plevna, the large train being safe and intact. Coffee was immediately made and the remaining cigarettes were distributed: for there was now no need for economy. At the invitation of my kindly hosts I remained in the konak some hours longer

sitting by the window, smoking, and drowsily watching the merciless rain, as it transformed the deserted little square in front of the building into a lake of turbid, liquid mud. The wind was high, and tore the swift, dark clouds into grotesque and rugged shapes; the atmosphere was thick, raw, and chilly; altogether it was one of those typical autumn days which make one long for closed blinds, cosy lamplight, and a peaceful fireside, luxuries I dreamt of enviously as I shivered in the draughty, cheerless room, which served as office for the administration of stores in day-time, and as sleeping-quarters to a dozen men at night.

Towards dusk I thought it high time to leave, if I meant to get a conveyance to the redoubt that day. I dreaded going back to the mosque, fearing the derision of those who had seen me depart in the afternoon. The rain showed no signs of ceasing, so I wrapped my great-coat round me and set forth with the aid of my stick. Hardly had I walked 200 yards in the direction of the trysting-place of the carts and their drivers when I fell, partly from weakness, partly owing to the slipperiness of the soil, and sprained my ankle. I managed to get up, but could not put my foot to the ground; so I limped to the nearest fence and waited for events, in a sore plight of pain, helplessness, wet, dirt, and diarrhœa—which latter had suddenly returned with astonishing vigour. Not far from me was a house flying the Red Crescent. A man passed who took me thither. This was an ambulance conducted by a German surgeon, Lange by name, if I remember correctly. Happily he had a bed vacant, the inmate of which had just died. The corpse was taken out, the bedding received a *pro forma* shake, and I was installed. My foot was bathed and bandaged, and the wound in my leg, which had broken open afresh in the fall, was attended to. The diarrhœa was stopped by a copious draught of an opiate, and did not reappear. I had a good supper. In the night I heard the tramp of battalions: the van of the Orkanyé column was coming in. At dawn there was half an hour's cannonade in the west: the main body was engaged with

Russian cavalry. At noon (September 24) the column arrived in town, and was enthusiastically received. I stayed in the ambulance for, I think, a week. It held fifty patients; ten shared my room. Food was once more good and plentiful; even luxuries (tobacco, brandy, broth, milk, coffee) were distributed; drugs and medicines were sufficient; treatment was considerate and competent, attendance mediocre, the doctor having no help except two unskilled and overworked assistants (convalescent soldiers), and no menials save an aged Turkish vineyard labourer, who looked like the demon of unrighteousness, and behaved like an angel of mercy. This man had the occasional voluntary aid of patriotic residents, and was also assisted by the compulsory labour of a couple of stalwart, sullen Bulgarians, who had offended, and had to scrub the floors by way of punishment. One—a Christian, think of that!—had the incredible brutality to kick a maimed and unconscious invalid when he fancied himself unobserved, and was flogged in the back-yard by a gang of only too willing soldiers specially told off for this labour of love. I was charged with the duty of seeing the punishment properly carried out. Never did I accomplish any task set to me with more zest and zeal. The brute was laid up for many weeks.

By October 1 (if my calculations are correct) I had overcome my three ailments—shot in the leg, sprained ankle, weakness left by dysentery—and returned to my redoubt on a cart conveying maize. In the meantime my captain had recovered from the wound received in the second battle, and had arrived in Plevna from Sofia with the Orkanyé column. The company was again in his charge, and I had my old squad, Jack his, Tereb (meanwhile cured) that of the late Mehemed Hardar, Azif the colour squad. Thus we had once more our full complement of five officers, and my second company command was at an end, having lasted—exclusive of sojourn in ambulances—from August 4 to September 18, forty-five days.

This arrangement did not hold good for long. On October 7 (the day on which we first had snow, which lasted, on and off, till the end of the campaign) the captain was transferred to another company of my battalion which had a dearth of officers. I became, for the third time, company leader, and retained this position up to the surrender (fifty-six days, October 7 to December 10, deducting eight days spent in the hospital in November); the colour squad and my old squad were fused into one. The company, now reduced by illness and losses to 110 men, counted three squads, the first under Seymour, the second under Tereb, the third under Azif. At this strength and in this order we remained until the beginning of November.

On October 1 the enemy's forces commenced to approach our positions and—what they had not done before—to fortify themselves. Soon their line formed a semicircle almost concentric with ours, from Bivolar in the north, *viâ* Kanli Tabiya, Grivitzza, and Radishevo, to Brestovitz in the south. The average distance between the two front lines was 1,500 yards, but at Kanli Tabiya it was less than 100 yards.

It is necessary here to summarise the adventures of the Orkanyé reinforcement column.*

The column started from Orkanyé early on September 18, in the following order:—

Van.

Commander : Brigadier Edhem Pasha.

Second : Lieut.-Col. Isset Bey.

4 squadrons cavalry.

First Brigade : 6 battalions.

1 section artillery : 2 guns (3 lb.).

2 companies engineers.

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

Main Body.

Commander : General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

Second : Brigadier Haki Pasha.

Third Regiment : 3 battalions.

1 squadron cavalry.

Train.

1 battery : 6 guns (6 lb.).

Reserve : 5 battalions.

Rear.

Commander : Lieut.-Col. Tahir Bey.

Fourth Regiment : 3 battalions.

2 sections artillery : 4 guns (3 lb.).

1 squadron cavalry.

The journey to Telish took three days, owing to the bad weather, to the condition of the soil, and to the fact that the Russians had destroyed several bridges. Near Telish the enemy had made a long stretch of the road impassable by means of holes, ditches, and barriers of felled trees. Ahmed Hifzi, who had arrived in Telish on the evening of the 20th, was compelled to stop here ; the troops erected earthworks while the engineers repaired the road. On the 21st the Russians attacked, and were driven off. At dawn on the 22nd the column started, after having again been attacked. There being strong masses of hostile cavalry on the flanks and in the rear, whilst the road and the country ahead seemed to be open, Ahmed Hifzi made a rearrangement of his column : he transferred five battalions of the First Brigade (hitherto the vanguard) to the rear, and placed the latter under Edhem Pasha. Thus the order was :—

Van : Isset Bey.

1 battalion, 4 squadrons, 2 guns.

Main body, with train : Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

8 battalions, 1 squadron, 6 guns.

Rear : Edhem Pasha.

8 battalions, 1 squadron, 4 guns.

At noon on the 22nd the van reached Gorna Dubnik, and whilst the main body and the train were marching in, the Russians attacked the rear. The fighting lasted till nine at night, when the enemy retreated. The Turkish losses were trifling; Edhem Pasha was wounded. The thirty hostile guns inflicted little punishment, in spite of eight hours' shelling.

Next day (23rd) a squadron of regular cavalry arrived from Dolna Dubnik, where the detachment sent by Osman from Plevna to facilitate Ahmed Hifzi's advance had bivouacked; this force was made up as follows:—

Commander : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.

Infantry : 1 brigade (6 battalions).

Cavalry : 2 squadrons regulars.

10 „ Saloniki auxiliaries.

Artillery : 1 horse-battery (4 lb.).

Total: 6 battalions, 12 squadrons; or, 4,000 men with 6 guns.

They had occupied Dolna Dubnik after a smart encounter; thus the communication with Ahmed Hifzi was established and the road was open. Ahmed Hifzi arrived in Dolna Dubnik on the 23rd, and sent his van, with part of the train, the same night to Plevna, where it arrived before dawn; the main body had half an hour's cannonade with the enemy early on the 24th, and reached Plevna at noon with not a single cart missing. The expedition had cost the Turks from first to last no more than fifty men in killed and wounded.

8,000 Russian and Roumanian horsemen and forty guns had been unable to impede the progress of a procession of vehicles which must have been ten to fifteen miles long.¹⁰²

The strength of the Plevna army was, after September 24: 63 battalions infantry, 25 squadrons cavalry, 500 Circassians, 14 batteries artillery, 3 companies engineers; or, 34,000 men with 84 guns, at which figure it remained (less casualties and invalids) till October 8.¹⁰³

After the arrival of Ahmed Hifzi's column we had plenty

of everything save forage ; to make good this deficiency, by getting in the large stores of grain, hay, and straw of the surrounding villages, Osman organised, on September 27, a flying column, which had the following constitution :—

Commander : General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

First Brigade : Brigadier Haki Pasha.

6 battalions.

Second Brigade : Colonel Veli Bey.

6 battalions.

8 squadrons regulars : Colonel Bekir Bey.

1 battery (6 lb.).

Train : 300 empty carts.

Total : 6,000 men with 6 guns.

This force concentrated between Plevna and the Vid bridge on the evening of September 27, started from the bridge at daybreak on the 28th, and between this day and October 3 it got in all the stores of both Dubniks, both Netropoliés, Ternina, Blasivatz, Disevitza, Kartushaven, and Medeven into Plevna without being prevented by the enemy, who attacked on September 28 and 30 and was repelled. The fighting on the last-named day was severe, and cost the Turks 200 in killed and wounded, the Russians treble that number. The 300 carts were filled from five to seven times.

From October 7 to 24 the Orkanyé road was open. During this time there arrived many small trains of supplies, and one large one, escorted by a column under Chefket Pasha, commander of Orkanyé, which started on October 5, and was constituted as follows :—

Commander : General of Division Chefket Pasha.

First Brigade : Brigadier Hussein Vasfi Pasha.

6 battalions.

Second Brigade : Brigadier Omer Tafir Pasha.

6 battalions.

Reserve : Lieut.-Col. Pertev Bey.

9 battalions (of which 6 were left in Telish).

Cavalry : Lieut.-Col. Chefki Bey.

800 Circassians.

Artillery : 2 batteries, 6 lb. (12 guns, of which 4 were left in Telish).

Train : 500 carts with victuals, 400 packhorses with ammunition, 4,000 head of cattle.

Total : 21 battalions ; or, 16,000 men with 12 guns.¹⁰⁴

Chefket Pasha was the bearer of an autograph letter from the Sultan to Osman, in which the title of Ghazi was conferred upon the latter.

On the 6th the column had a successful engagement with the enemy's cavalry (Colonel Levis' detachment).

On the 7th Telish was reached, which was fortified, and garrisoned by six battalions and four guns. Snow fell, and the roads were execrable ; it froze hard for several days, and in parts the snow stood twelve to eighteen inches deep. The journey was one of great difficulties, despite the fact that the Russians made no serious attempt to interrupt it. There was a skirmish in the vicinity of Telish on this day.

On the same day (October 7) a column was sent from Plevna to meet Chefket halfway, which was composed as follows :—

Commander : General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

First Brigade ; Brigadier Haki Pasha.

6 battalions.

Second Brigade : Colonel Veli Bey.

6 battalions.

Third Brigade : Lieut.-Col. Isset Bey.

5 battalions.

8 squadrons regular cavalry	} Colonel Bekir Bey.
10 „ Saloniki auxiliaries	
2 batteries (6lb.)	

Total : 17 battalions, 18 squadrons ; or, 9,000 men with 12 guns.

The two detachments met between Telish and Gorna

Dubnik, and on October 8 Chefket and the bulk of his column entered Plevna, having lost not a single cart and only a few men, the latter being mostly casualties arising from accidents or exposure. In town the gallant and clever Commander of Orkanyé was received with well-deserved enthusiasm ; for ever since our arrival in Plevna it was due to him that we had been kept so well supplied with all necessaries.

The road was once more open ; the telegraph had been restored. Between October 8 and 24 supplies came in almost daily, but no further reinforcements arrived. The hospitals and ambulances of Plevna were evacuated, the wounded, the sick, and the prisoners being sent to Orkanyé, and thence to Sofia.

Chefket had consultations with Osman and his officers. It became known that his greatest difficulty was to obtain a sufficient number of carts ; the country had been ransacked for these, and the owners were clamouring for the return of their properties ; in many places the corn was rotting in the fields for want of vehicles to convey it to the stores. In addition to this, Chefket did not receive the desirable and necessary assistance from the civil officials ; in fact, he was at loggerheads with the Kaim-Makam of Orkanyé and his subordinates. How often it happens in warfare that the stay-at-home pen-and-ink heroes undo that which brave men with sword and rifle accomplish at the cost of life, limb, and health !

To give the reader an idea of the task of supplying an army, I may remark that 250 carts with victuals and 1,000 head of cattle constituted a week's sustenance of the Plevna troops, not to mention forage, clothing, arms and ammunition.

Chefket Pasha returned to Orkanyé on October 9 with a mounted escort and a few companies, and captured on the way a Russian convoy with 15,000 sheep and bullocks, part of which he sent to Plevna.

The strength of the Plevna army was now : 84 battalions infantry, 25 squadrons cavalry, 1,000 Circassians (12

squadrons), 16 batteries of artillery, 3 companies of engineers, 1 battalion of volunteers (foot), 1 squadron of mounted volunteers; or, 48,000 men with 96 guns.¹⁰⁵

This was the highest figure which the Plevna army reached at any time. At this strength it remained until October 24, when the enemy completed the circle which surrounded the Turkish camp, and thus commenced the second, or real, investment of Plevna, which was never interrupted, and ended only with the sortie of December 10. The garrison of Dolna Dubnik was enabled to get into Plevna on October 27; Gorna Dubnik and Telish, with their garrisons, were taken by the enemy on October 24 and 28. This reduced the Plevna army at the end of October to 72 battalions with 88 guns.

The 84 battalions, 25 squadrons, and 96 guns which constituted the Plevna army between October 8 and 24 were distributed as follows:—

Place	Battalions	Squadrons	Guns	Commander
Plevna Camp . . .	67	21	86	Osman Pasha
Dolna Dubnik . . .	5	—	2	Veli Bey
Gorna Dubnik . . .	6	4	4	Ahmed Hifzi Pasha
Telish	6	—	4	Haki Pasha
Totals	84	25	96 ¹⁰⁶	

The important points on the Orkanyé road between Telish and Orkanyé had been garrisoned by Chefket Pasha with troops taken from the stationary division of the latter place, each town by two or three battalions and two to six guns. Thus the road was occupied in stages, as set forth in the table at the head of page 300.

In addition, Chefket Pasha had in each of the following places: Etropol, Tashkessen, Kormatzi, Strigel¹⁰⁷—one to three battalions and two to six guns; also two battalions and three guns in a place called Demirkiui, which was frequently mentioned in camp, but which I have not found on any map, and of the exact locality of which I am ignorant.¹⁰⁸

Station	Distance in Miles between Stations	Battalions	Squadrons	Guns	Total in Men
Plevna . . .	—	67	21	86	39,000
Dolna Dubnik . . .	9	5	—	2	2,500
Gorna Dubnik . . .	6	6	4	4	3,500
Telish . . .	6	6	—	4	3,000
Radomirtzi . . .	6	3	—	6	1,500
Lukovitzza . . .	3	2	—	2	1,000
Yablonitzza . . .	14	2	2	4	1,000
Orkanyé . . .	20	12	6	6	6,500
Totals . . .	64	103	33	114	58,000

In Sofia there were at that time only five battalions, three squadrons, and six guns. In the beginning of November a large army concentrated south of the Baba Konak Pass, between the latter and Sofia, under Mehemed Ali Pasha, which, although as early as November 7 it comprised forty-three battalions, twenty-eight squadrons, and six batteries (24,000 men), was not able to assist Osman Pasha. This was the long-promised, much-talked-of, and bitterly disappointing 'Army for the relief of Plevna,' as it was grandiloquently styled. I shall call it the Baba Konak army.¹⁰⁹

I append a summary of the forces nominally under

Place	Battalions	Squadrons	Guns	Commander
Plevna army . . .	84	25	96	Osman Pasha
Orkanyé road from Radomirtzi to Orkanyé . . .	19	8	18	} Chefket Pasha (Orkanyé)
Etropol . . .	2	—	2	
Demirkiui . . .	2	—	3	
Tashkessen, Kormatzi	6	—	6	} Mehemed Ali Pasha (Sofia)
Strigel . . .	1	—	3	
Sofia . . .	5	3	6	
Rahova . . .	5	—	—	} Mehemed Isset Pasha (Widdin)
Lom Palankah . . .	3	—	—	
North-Western Frontiers . . .	4	—	—	
Widdin . . .	12	1	6	
Totals . . .	143	37	140	

exclusive of Circassians (12 squadrons in Plevna) and fort artillery (in Rahova, Lom Palankah, and Widdin).

Osman Pasha's command on October 24 (see table at foot of page 300). As on this day he was cut off from the world, he practically ceased to command any but the Plevna troops.*

The stages of the Orkanyé road were utilised almost daily between October 8 and 24 for getting in supplies, each station sending an escort to the next, so that special convoys were rendered unnecessary. The trains of invalids from Plevna, bound for Orkanyé, were treated in the same manner.

The following list of Superior Officers of the Plevna Army between September 24 and December 10, 1877, will be found useful :—

Marshal : Ghazi Osman Pasha.

Generals of Division : Adil Pasha, Ahmed Hifzi Pasha (taken prisoner October 24), Hassan Sabri Pasha (convalescent).

Generals of Brigade : Tahir Pasha (Chief-of-Staff), Ahmed Pasha (Commander of Artillery), Emin Pasha (convalescent), Tewfik Pasha, Hussein Vasfi Pasha, Edhem Pasha, Sadik Pasha, Atouf Pasha, Omer Tafir Pasha, Haki Pasha (taken prisoner October 28).

Colonels : Hairi Bey, Hafouz Bey, Omer Bey, Hamdi Bey, Suleiman Bey, Yunuz Bey, Said Bey, Veli Bey, Osman Bey (Commander of Cavalry), Bekir Bey (cavalry), Hassib Bey (Surgeon-in-Chief).

Lieutenant-Colonels : Mehemed Nazif Bey, Latif Bey, Mehemed Bey, Kazim Bey, Raif Bey, Eyub Bey, Natou Bey, Zini Bey, Pertev Bey, Abdullah Bey, Tahir Bey, Talahat Bey (Aide-de-Camp), Ali Mehemed Bey, Isset Bey (taken prisoner October 24), Hourshid Bey, Rassim Bey, Tiflik Bey (engineers), Chefki Bey (cavalry), Haki Bey (cavalry), Hussein Bey (Commander of Plevna town).

Foreign Surgeons : ¹¹⁰ German : Lange, Schmitz, Kuhle. English : Crossby, Wilson. French : Pain. Austrian : Ollis.¹¹¹

I return to the personal part of my narrative. I have

* For *Ordre de Bataille* and List of Redoubts see Appendix.

said that on October 1st I arrived at my redoubt, and that on the 7th I resumed command of my company. Between these two dates nothing of any moment happened. We had no fighting to do, and our occupation consisted of the bare redoubt routine. The health of the men was unsatisfactory, but spirit and *morale* were good. We were convinced that the Sultan would not allow the Plevna troops, the one army of the Empire which had been uniformly victorious and had upheld the honour of the Crescent banner in the eyes of the country and the world, to succumb for want of support. How sadly were we disappointed in this !

The weather was cold and wet. On the 7th there was a heavy fall of snow in the morning. It thawed during the day, and at night it froze, and snowed again ; for some days locomotion on either the slush or ice-covered ground was difficult and dangerous. Several accidents occurred. One man of my battalion, in falling impaled himself on his bayonet and died in horrible agonies. The cart-oxen suffered severely ; these poor brutes very soon grew footsore. We heard of severe frost and snows in and on the northern slopes of the Balkans ; the roads were impassable, and even the good Orkanyé road was reported to be in a bad state. With us snow and rain continued in charming variety for a week, when we had a spell of moderately fine weather, lasting a few days—after which the winter set in with deadly earnest.

Shells were exchanged daily. The Russians had constructed a line of entrenchments 1,700 to 2,000 yards north of our north front, and parallel with it, and began to honour my redoubt with their attentions, for the first time since the second battle ; but their projectiles invariably fell short. Altogether, this continuous desultory artillery duel was devoid of result.

We had now a small redoubt called Yeni Tabiya on our left, at right angles across the Nikopoli road, thus establishing a more intimate connection with the Bukova redoubts.

On the 8th the Sultan's letter to Osman, conferring the

title of Ghazi upon our leader, and thanking him and his army for the brilliant victory of September 11 and 12, was read out during parade. It was an interesting and impressive ceremony. The troops cheered enthusiastically, and the artillery fired the customary volley. We were in high spirits, and wished for nothing more than that the Russians would again attack—in which hope we were disappointed. The spectres of investment and starvation, having once already shown their ugly faces to us in a manner that left no doubt as to the deadly earnest of their intentions, had conveniently retired out of sight for the time being; for the Orkanyé road was again open, was fortified and garrisoned in its cleverly chosen stages, and commanded by such able men as Ahmed Hifzi and Chefket. Nevertheless, we knew that those blood-thirsty demons were lurking round the corner, waiting for the slightest chance offered to them by any error of commission or omission on our part to enclose us in their fangs. But, we argued, should the worst come to the worst, should the road again be occupied by the Russians—who were evidently holding back in view of some grand effort—was it likely that the Sultan and the nation would leave the gallant Plevna army in the lurch? Alas! they did, and, unhappily for us, the effort for which the enemy was preparing was not a fresh attack, as we fondly hoped and believed, not even a regular siege, but a simple investment, tedious and inglorious, almost without fighting, and devoid of any chances of success for us save those coming from without. And as succour never reached us, however faithfully promised by the Padishah—so the troops were repeatedly told during the next two months—Plevna, although gloriously defended, was bound to fall.

It stands to reason that frost, snow, rain, dysentery, fever and other disorders affected our temper, comfort, and well-being; but we managed to brave these foes also, and up to the end of November we kept our spirits and hoped from day to day for relief.

In Bash Tabiya, separated from the Russian front line

by a hundred yards only, two battalions were stationary; these were assisted by another battalion, taken in turns from the First Division; the latter occupied the trenches, whilst the stationary battalions held the redoubt itself and the reserve entrenchment in the rear. The auxiliary battalion was relieved every two days, and it fell to the lot of mine to proceed to this, the most exposed point of our front, and the post of honour and danger, on October 15.

I must mention that in Bash and Kanli Tabiyas mining operations were conducted, but neither the Turks nor the Roumanians exploded their mines. The knowledge of the ground being undermined and charged with explosives had a dangerously demoralising influence upon the troops, and I believe that Osman gave instructions to have the mines filled up; in any case, they were never utilised, and the works were left incomplete. A similar thing happened in the Roumanian camp.

Nothing occurred during my stay in Bash Tabiya, except some desultory shelling and rifle-firing; my men, in the first trench, brought down a gang of Roumanians working at their entrenchments. We fired on every man who showed ever so small a portion of his body; sometimes twenty rifles were levelled at a shoulder, a cap, the corner of a coat. When we brought the game down we shouted with delight. It was very entertaining and exhilarating. We made 'big bags' those two days, and the excitement of the chase improved our temper amazingly.

On the 17th we returned to our redoubt. Next day it was made known in camp that the Russian corps of Guards and Grenadiers had arrived in Sistova, and were proceeding to join the army operating against Plevna. We also heard—what had been rumoured for some time past—of the famous Tolleben's installation as 'Assistant' to Prince Charles of Roumania, which meant as commander; thus we knew that the issue between Turkey and Russia on this point—that is, the issue of the war—was to be decided by the skill and science of military engineers.

On October 19 the Roumanians attacked Bash Tabiya, and were repulsed. They renewed their onslaught during the night, with the same result. Their losses amounted to 1,000, ours to 200, in killed and wounded. The fighting was of the most desperate and ferocious description. The Roumanians used ladders for climbing the redoubt (thirty feet high), placed at an angle of nearly ninety degrees, whilst the Turks battered the assailants' heads in with butt-ends of rifles, axes, spades, anything that came handy. Reinforcements were sent from my redoubt and from other works, but most of them were not required. This was the last attempt made by the enemy to take Bash Tabiya by assault.

On the 20th there was heavy shelling on both sides for an hour or two. We turned out for battle, but were not attacked. My battalion lost ten men by shells; my company had no casualties. Weather cold but clear.

October 21.—Desultory shelling all day long. Snow set in again, after a few days' interruption, and lasted, on and off, until the end of the campaign. Fresh rumours of an Anglo-Turkish alliance, this time with such appearance of probability and such minuteness of detail that even Jack and I were constrained to believe in it. For an hour or two we were terribly excited: Jack upset the kettle and scalded to death a dog, whose carcase was immediately devoured by his brethren—an edifying spectacle, from which we drew a salutary moral. Adil Pasha, appealed to, characterised the reports as lies. At night a violent and urgent alarm was raised. My company, for once in a while, had been given permission to undress. We turned out in a variety of charming *négligés*. The company presented such a grotesque appearance by the light of a hastily made up fire that the night rang with our laughter. One man wore a woman's petticoat; another, fez, towel, and boots; a third, bathing-drawers and spectacles; a fourth, a blanket. The alarm turned out to be false, but we had a hearty laugh.

October 22.—A black day. My company occupies front trench; a few Circassians are placed under my orders. I

inspect the outposts. When I return, some hours later, I am hailed before the ferik. It appears the Circassians have committed a murderous assault upon a Bulgarian family on the tramp, have outraged the women, nearly killed a baby, maimed the paterfamilias. The ferik reads me a severe lecture. I reply that although I am fully aware of my responsibility, and do not intend to shirk it, I beg of him to take into consideration the fact of my having been a mile away when the affair happened, and not having heard of it until three hours afterwards. He says in substance: 'You can go, but do not do it again.' I have a good mind to ask, 'Do not do what again?' but bite my tongue and am silent, which is the best course to pursue under such circumstances. So far as I am concerned the affair is buried in oblivion; not so with the Circassians. What makes it worse for them is the fact that these Bulgarians were not clandestine fugitives, but had left Plevna with the Mushir's permission; in fact, they had a safe-conduct as far as our front line. (Osman got rid of some of the Bulgarians at that time, so as to have fewer mouths to feed; a hundred families were sent away between October 15 and 24—I cannot say 'expelled,' because they were only too glad to go, and would have left before had they been allowed to do so.) One of the culprits has the bastinado applied so severely that his feet become jelly; another is flogged and degraded to do menial labour in town, such as scrubbing floors; two are locked up for a month. My major is very cross with me for an hour or so; but I tender an apology and a packet of cigarettes—the remains of a lady's present, made to me during my recent stay in town—with that 'denure impudence' (as Jack Seymour calls it) which I have often found serviceable. He laughs, and never alludes to the subject again. The colonel gives me one of the blackest looks I have ever had until I got married; an hour afterwards he comes to 'borrow' some cigarettes. The brigadier, although he is said to have been extremely angry, does not mention the matter to me. There has been a general all-round row, the affair having been reported to

the Mushir, and created an ugly stir in town. I knew Azif, Tereb, and Seymour to be as innocent as myself, the culprits having taken good care to have no witnesses. Nevertheless I interrogate them, in my capacity as company leader. The first two are as silent before me as I have been before the ferik, which annoys me; but try as I might I cannot be serious with Jack. 'Look here, old fellow,' he says to me; 'what is the use of kicking up such a beastly noise? I know as much of the affair as a babe unborn. So give us a pipe of tobacco—I haven't had a smoke these four days—and forget all about it.' We are all good friends again the same evening.

October 23.—Violent shelling all day long. My company lost two men. We are in battle order from morning till nightfall, but are not attacked. It becomes known that the Russians are drawing their right and left flanks westward, north and south of Plevna respectively, with a view of joining hands across the Vid west of Plevna, and thus completing the circle. From our ladder we can see the movements of troops two miles to the north and north-west. Cold day; slight snowfall. At night we are told that the Mushir has again asked for permission to evacuate Plevna whilst there is time, with a view of making Orkanyé the centre of operations, and joining hands with the army about to concentrate south of the Baba Konak Pass, under the leadership of Mehemed Ali Pasha, ordered to Sofia for this purpose, after having been replaced (on October 2) by Suleiman Pasha as Serdar Ekrem. The Sultan's telegraphic reply is a peremptory veto. 'Plevna has acquired such importance, strategical and political, that you must stay at any cost'—such is the substance of the Imperial decree, with the addition of voluble promises of help. We still believe in our Sovereign's fair words, and are of good cheer. Later (in Russia), I learnt that on October 25—that is, a day after the investment had become an accomplished fact—the Sultan had changed his mind and given his consent to Osman's project to

evacuate Plevna; which consent, of course, never came to our knowledge in Plevna. Once again, 'Just too late.'

October 24.—Heavy cannonade all day long at all points of the lines. We hear in the evening that there has been a serious engagement in the south-west between Krishin and Ternina, and that the Russians, although they were repeatedly repulsed, and left, when retreating hastily, the baggage of an entire regiment in the hands of the Turks, have finally succeeded in establishing themselves on the hills around Ternina. In this action the heroes of the third battle, Tewfik Pasha and Yunuz Bey, again distinguished themselves. The Turks lost 100 men, the Russians three times that number. On this day the Roumanians occupy Gorna Netropolié and Dolna Netropolié without bloodshed, these villages being outside the Turkish lines. We are anxious and excited, having been told that the wire to Orkanyé has been cut just as Osman was in telegraphic conversation with Chefket; that the look-outs in the observatories of the Krishin redoubts and in the windmills on the hilltops have reported cannonade and smoke in the west; that Colonel Veli, the commander of Dolna Dubnik, has sent a message to the effect that communication with Gorna Dubnik is interrupted, the enemy having occupied the road between these places in strong numbers, and that there has been severe fighting in the vicinity of the latter place.

Thus we were once more cut off from the world, and this time for good. The Orkanyé road was lost to the Turks for ever, and the circle which surrounded Plevna was complete; for the Russian-Roumanian cavalry under General Arnoldi (Krylow's successor) held the section between Gorna Dubnik and Ribina.

The troops soon regained their spirits after the terrifying effect of this news had worn off; for had not the Padishah given his Imperial word that help would be sent, not only in the shape of convoys with food and clothing, but also by means of a strong army of relief, which was about to be organised by no less a person than Mehemed Ali Pasha, our

late Serdar Ekrem, known to have no equal in such a task, whatever his strategical talents and performances may have been—the only man who, in his sturdy German honesty and hatred of Eastern dilatoriness, jobbery, and corruption, could save the Empire from the consequences, now apparent everywhere, of the accursed Petticoat-Pasha *régime*? And if one could not believe in an Emperor's solemn promise, whose word could still be held sacred? Was it likely that the nation would forget the Plevna army, the victors in three brilliant actions, battles which had rendered the name 'Plevna' famous wherever the telegraph had flashed and the journals carried it? We had been told that throughout the Sultan's dominions patriotic songs with Victorious Osman for their hero and 'Plevna shall never fall' for their burden were sung in *cafés*, in the streets, in public places, before enthusiastic multitudes; that men talked of nothing and nobody else but Plevna and Osman; that children played in the gutters at 'Plevna'; that the mosques were thronged with worshippers, women foremost, who prayed the God of Battles to assist the defenders of the country and the faith in the fights to come, as He had done so manifestly in the fights that had been. Yes, we trusted in God to protect us, in the Prophet to intercede for us; we trusted the Sultan to fulfil his promise, the nation to aid us; and we trusted in our own powers to carry us through—which last-named trust will never fail as long as man has power, physical, moral, and intellectual. When despair is blackest, when even hope seems quixotic, because there is nothing left to hope for, when all is lost *fors l'honneur*—even then there is the power remaining to man to rise to the loftiest pinnacle of manhood. To that height did the Ottoman troops rise during the period which ended with the day on which we made our last and supreme effort, that stupendous rush for liberty which will live in the records of history as one of its grandest and noblest episodes. Life is nothing in itself: only death can fix upon it the proper value; and we were determined, each and all, that death, should we fall, should stamp our lives as 'well spent.'

We trusted in God, but meanwhile we kept our powder dry; which means that we were unremitting in our vigilance. Woe to any Ghiaur who dared show a few inches of his miserable carcase: our bullets soon brought him down. Food we knew to be abundant; in fact, every commodity was well represented in the stores of the Plevna mosques save, perhaps, firewood, salt, and boots. Even the continual frost and snow, the cold blasts, the permanent exposure to the rigour of this almost Arctic winter, the comfortless and well-nigh shelterless quarters, the alarming spread of illness, did not dishearten us.

We learnt only a week later what had actually happened in Gorna Dubnik and Telish on October 24; but as the date belongs to the present chapter, I shall summarise here the occurrences of this eventful and fatal day, for which purpose I shall have to carry the reader back to the third battle.

After the ignominious failure of the much-talked-of, assiduously-prepared-for, anxiously expected storming of Plevna, which was to end the war brilliantly with one blow, which was to restore confidence at home and prestige abroad—both suffering severely under two crushing defeats—which was to break the record as regards bayonet charges on entrenched camps, hitherto claimed for the storming of Düppel in the Danish War of 1864, despair seized the Russian leaders. The Czar began to have qualms of conscience, owing to the fearful bloodshed already incurred, though the campaign had barely commenced; internal troubles shook the Empire, and could be appeased only by dazzling victories; thinking Russians had arrived at a proper estimate of the 'Christians' whom they had come to 'save.' To give up the war would be ruination for Russia's honour in the eyes of the country and of Europe; to continue at this rate, with Osman unconquered in the flank, would mean gradual annihilation of the Russian armies. Already 50,000 men had been sacrificed to this monster of iniquity—whose own losses were not a fourth of that figure—who had the barbaric impudence to impede the progress of Christian civilisation,

as understood by Russia. What was wanted now was a man to cope with this Mahomedan Moloch ; and at the supreme moment, after the inglorious defeat which seemed likely to cover the name of Russia with ridicule and dishonour, Alexander II. bethought himself of the man who, twenty-three years before, had made the world ring with his fame, who had been insolently passed over when the campaign commenced—Todleben, perhaps the greatest military engineer whom the world has seen, who was destined to add to the undying name of Defender of Sebastopol—honour to whom honour is due—that of Conqueror of Plevna ; for this proud title cannot in justice be claimed by Ganetzki, for whom it is sometimes usurped, the general to whom Osman surrendered himself and his army on the fatal 10th of December.¹¹²

Treated with contumely in May, General Todleben was hailed as the saviour of Russian prestige and military honour when he reached Gorna Studen, the Czar's residence, on September 27. On the 30th he arrived at Porodin, which was his headquarters at the commencement ; later, and until Plevna fell, he resided in Tultchenitza. On October 4 the Imperial Ukase was published which appointed Todleben 'Pashmushnik' (Adjutant, Assistant) to the Commander of the West Army, Prince Charles of Roumania ; which meant commander, inasmuch as the Prince continued to be a mere figure-head, having no authority over any but his own troops. A separate staff was given to Todleben, of which General Prince Imeretinski became the chief, General Reitlinger Chief Engineer, General Moller Commander of Artillery ; there were several other trained engineers of high standing on the Staff. General Sotow, hitherto Chief-of-Staff to Prince Charles, and real leader of the army, retired to the comparative privacy of Commander of the Fourth Corps (his original office), lately led by Krylow, who became Chief of the Cavalry on the left Vid bank. Some medical men of the highest repute were sent for, to attend to the sanitary condition of the West Army, which from all accounts seems to have been

infinitely worse than that of the Turks. Small wonder, for the Russians are heavy drinkers, the Turks abstainers; and as regards cleanliness, the latter are angels of purity compared to their opponents. Doctor Köcher, an authority on military sanitation, was appointed Chief Medical Inspector.

General Todleben's decision, to which he clung with remarkable obduracy till the end, in spite of violent, if abortive, opposition on the part of the Grand Duke Nicholas, Generals Gourko and Skobelev, and some others, was that Plevna should, and could only, be taken by a rigid investment. Any further attempts at storming would be as fruitless and as disastrous as that of September 11 had been. A regular siege was out of the question, in view of the extent of the Turkish camp (seven miles east to west, and the same length north to south; twenty-five square miles in area; total length of front lines, thirty miles), and from the fact that the Russians had no siege artillery on the spot (except thirty heavy guns), and would not be able to get any—with the distance to be traversed, the state of the roads, the weather, and the Bulgarian winter ahead, known for its Arctic character—for, perhaps, months to come. From first to last Todleben never stirred a hair's-breadth from his original intention, which he carried through with indomitable energy and an admirable directness of purpose. In Sotow, Krüdener, and Imeretinski he found willing and devoted followers. These men had each personally felt the heaviness of Osman's hand, and shrank from fresh encounters. The Czar was throughout in agreement with Todleben.¹¹³

The latter perceived at once that an investment could not be properly initiated and maintained without strong reinforcements. The Imperial Guards and Grenadiers were despatched from St. Petersburg. Meanwhile the last three weeks of September and the first three of October were spent in inactivity, excepting the Roumanian onslaughts on Bash Tabiya and as regards the cavalry, which, as we have seen, tried, and failed, to prevent Osman from getting supplies and reinforcements into Plevna. On October 17

the Guards arrived at Sistova, and two days later they joined the West Army. A special corps was formed, its task being to complete the investment west of Plevna. Its commander was General Gourko, of Balkan fame, a man characterised by a surprising impetuosity and a love of audacious and fool-hardy ventures.¹¹⁴

Gourko had at his disposal :—

Guards Corps.

Infantry :	3 divisions.
	1 Chasseur brigade.
Cavalry :	1 division.
	1 Cossack regiment.
Artillery :	96 guns field artillery.
	18 guns horse artillery.
Total :	40 battalions, 30 squadrons, 114 guns.

Arnoldi's Corps (late Krylow's).

Infantry :	7 Roumanian battalions.
Cavalry :	8 Russian regiments.
	6 Roumanian regiments.
Artillery :	8 guns field artillery.
	30 guns horse artillery.

Total : 7 battalions, 62 squadrons, 38 guns.

Loschkareff's Cavalry Division : 18 squadrons, 12 guns.

Grand total of Gourko's corps : 47 battalions, 110 squadrons, 164 guns.

Opposed to which was, on October 24: Ahmed Hifzi's division of 17 battalions, 4 squadrons, and 10 guns.

During the night of October 23–24 Gourko occupied the Orkanyé road in three places : between Dolna Dubnik and Gorna Dubnik, between Gorna Dubnik and Telish, between Telish and Radomirtzi—all three detachments facing both ways.

For the attack on Gorna Dubnik were selected twenty battalions and six squadrons (20,000 men), with sixty guns ;

opposed to which were six battalions and four squadrons (3,500 men), with four guns, commanded by Ahmed Hifzi Pasha, with Isset Bey as second.

For the attack on Telish were selected four battalions and twenty-two squadrons (6,500 men), with twenty guns; opposed to which were six battalions (3,000 men), no cavalry, and four guns, under Haki Pasha.

Against Radomirtzi and Dolna Dubnik only demonstrations were to be made.

The storming of Gorna Dubnik commenced at eight in the morning of October 24, and for ten hours 3,500 Turks with four guns defended themselves magnificently and successfully against 20,000 Russians with sixty guns. Ahmed Hifzi fully justified the expectations of the Plevna army, and his men performed prodigies of bravery. At six in the evening two Russian battalions got unperceived as far as the principal Turkish redoubt, under cover of darkness, and took the work by a surprise attack. Ahmed Hifzi, Isset, and 2,000 survivors were compelled to surrender, having spent their cartridges; 1,500 men had been killed or disabled. The Russians made arrangements to shoot the Turkish officers—why, I have never learnt—but were stopped at the last moment by General Gourko's timely arrival upon the scene. The Cossacks fired some huts containing wounded, and burnt alive a hundred maimed and helpless men. When Ahmed Hifzi implored Gourko to give orders to quench the conflagration, the latter promised to inquire into the matter, but did nothing, and the fire burnt itself out. This account was given to me by an eyewitness whom I met subsequently in Kharkoff.

The Russian losses amounted to 3,400 killed and wounded; which implies that every defender killed or disabled (on an average) one assailant. The proportion of casualties to troops engaged was exceptionally heavy in this action, being, roughly, one to five. Altogether, this was one of the best-fought and, for the Turks, most creditable affairs of the war. The lesson to be drawn from this engagement, as well as from the

storming of Lovdcha on September 3, and from the second and third battles of Plevna, is that one Turkish company had the tactical value of a Russian battalion, and one Turkish gun that of a Russian battery.

On the same day (October 24) Telish was repeatedly attacked, but, brilliantly defended by Haki Pasha, withstood all onslaughts. The Russians lost 1,000 men, of which 900 were among the four battalions belonging to this column (or 30 per cent.), and 100 among cavalry and artillery. The Turkish losses were 200.

In the neighbourhood of Dolna Dubnik there were only unimportant skirmishes. Veli Bey informed the Mushir that he was cut off from Gorna Dubnik.

The three battalions stationed in Radomirtzi started to assist the garrison of Telish, but, finding the road barred by a force five times their strength, withdrew after a smart encounter.

That on this day the Russians occupied the Ternina hills has already been said.

I append a summary of the various engagements fought on October 24, with their casualties :

	Turks.	Russians.
Action on the Ternina hills	100	300
Skirmishes near Dolna Dubnik	50	50
Storming of Gorna Dubnik	1,500	3,400
Attack on Telish	200	1,000
Skirmish near Radomirtzi	50	150
	<hr/> 1,900	<hr/> 4,900

The position of the Russian West Army on the evening of October 24 can best be explained by a diagram (see p. 316).

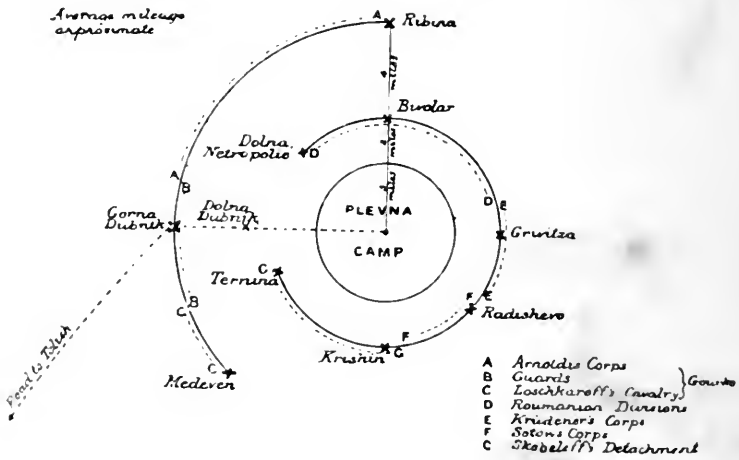
On October 27 the Turks abandoned Dolna Dubnik, and on the 30th Telish surrendered ; but these dates belong to the next chapter.

Here it would be well to give a general summary of the operations. I shall start with September 6—the positions on this day having been given in Chapter IX.—and take as

termination of the period October 24, the date which rendered the investment of Plevna an accomplished fact.

Firstly, as regards affairs in Europe.

The Czarevitch's army (the left wing of the Russian invasion of European Turkey) was unsuccessfully attacked on September 15, in its position at Chairkiui, by a combined Turkish-Egyptian corps. Mehemed Ali Pasha now abandoned the offensive, and retreated (September 29) to Kadikiui. On October 2 Suleiman Pasha replaced him as Serdar Ekrem. The latter retreated with the bulk of his



army (October 20) to Rasgrad, leaving single divisions at Kadikini and Solenik, whilst the Russians advanced again as far as the Black Lom.

General Radetzki's (late Gourko's) Shipka Pass Army formed the centre of the Russian invasion. Suleiman Pasha was unable to do anything (save shelling), being, ever since the August assault, engaged in the reorganisation of his army. On September 18 he attacked again, and was repulsed. Towards the end of September Reuf Pasha replaced Suleiman as commander of the Shipka Army. Reuf found enough to do to prepare and strengthen the sad remnants which his

predecessor had left him for fresh attacks. At the end of October the opposing armies lay opposite to each other in their old positions; *i.e.* the Russians in the Shipka Pass, the Turks at its southern outlet, in a strongly fortified camp around Shipka and Shainovo.

The West Army, under Prince Charles of Roumania, formed the right wing of the Russian invasion. When the assault on Plevna of September 11 had failed, all thoughts of taking the place by force were given up, and the Russians resigned themselves to the idea that Osman was invincible except by starvation. Henceforth Todleben took the lead.

Secondly, as regards affairs in Asia.

General Oklobchio's Corps (the Russian right wing) did nothing in its fortified position at Mukha Estatu. Opposed to him was Dervish Pasha, at Batum, likewise inactive.

The Russian centre, under Loris Melikoff, in the fortified camp of Kurukdara, was opposed by Moukhtar Pasha's force, entrenched on the Aladja Dag. On October 2 Melikoff attacked, and was repulsed. On October 9 Moukhtar gave up voluntarily the hill called Kizil Tépé, for the possession of which the battles of August 25 and October 2 had been fought. The Grand Duke Michael, who now took personal command, undertook, on October 14, a general assault on the Turkish position, called the battle of Aladja Dag, which ended with a Russian victory: 8,000 Turks surrendered; Moukhtar escaped with 6,000 men to the Soghanlü Dag. General Lazareff, with three divisions, besieged Kars, whilst General Heiman, with the rest of the corps, started on October 20 in pursuit of Moukhtar.

General Tergukasoff's Corps (the Russian left wing) had, on September 19, an undecided engagement with Ismael Pasha, who again tried to penetrate from Bayazid to Erivan. At the beginning of October Ismael had to send half his detachment to Moukhtar. After the Russian victory of the Aladja Dag Ismael retreated, on October 18, with a view of joining hands with Moukhtar and the remnants of his army, and reached Gerger on October 24

We in Plevna learnt only the bare outlines of the events I have summarised. We knew that in Europe affairs were more or less *in statu quo*; that in Asia there had been severe and frequent fighting, which had culminated in a serious defeat for the Turks (the battle of the Aladja Dag),¹¹⁵ and in the siege of Kars, the Ottoman stronghold in Asia: upon this town rested the nation's hopes so far as Asiatic operations were concerned: it had been the bone of contention in previous wars, the object and scene of many a sanguinary encounter; and its fall was to be the death-blow to the Turkish arms in Asia, as that of Plevna to those in Europe.



CHAPTER XII

THE INVESTMENT

OCTOBER 25 TO DECEMBER 9, 1877

ON October 25 the Russians began to shell the redoubts recently erected west of Plevna, particularly Pertev Tabiya. This cannonade lasted for four days and nights, with little interruption. There were several infantry skirmishes. The opposing lines had been brought into so close a proximity that it was found impossible to avoid engagements, although—so I ascertained later—on both sides orders to this effect had been given. During these four days there was hardly any shelling in other quarters.

The weather was cold and stormy, with fogs at dusk and light snowfalls; this state of things continued until the end of the campaign. Occasionally it thawed, when the mud was terrible. The roads and tracks were in an awful condition. Sometimes sleet or rain took the place of snow. I found it hard to realise that this country, now often snow-clad, was the same in which, three to four months before, we had lain prostrate with tropical heat, panting for a breath of fresh air and a cooling shower of rain.

On October 26 Veli Bey reported ominous silence in the direction of Gorna Dubnik. The Mushir instructed him to evacuate Dolna Dubnik and retire to Plevna. This he did, skilfully and successfully, on the following day, with some desultory fighting on the way, bringing the Turkish inhabitants of the village with him, much to the Mushir's annoyance, for it meant so many more mouths to feed. But they

had begged hard to be allowed to get into Plevna, shrinking in horror from the idea that they would have to trust themselves and their wives and daughters to the tender mercies of their Christian neighbours.

On this day (October 27) some battalions sent by the Mushir to meet Veli's column had a most desperate encounter with Russian infantry in the neighbourhood of the Vid bridge, in which the Turks were victorious. The fighting in this little action was of an extraordinarily ferocious character, and it was said that on both sides a third of the troops engaged had been laid low.

On the following day (October 28) there was an engagement with those Russian troops who were erecting fortifications between Termina and Brestovitz, opposite to Ghazi Osman, Yunuz, Milas, Baghché and Pertev Tabiyas. It was an offensive movement on the part of the Turks, but had no result. On the same day the Russians fired artillery-salutes along the whole line—to celebrate the investment, as some prisoners told us.

On the 30th Dolna Dubnik was occupied by the enemy.

On the 31st a few Turkish soldiers entered camp by the Vid bridge, having been liberated by General Gourko, and reported that on the 24th Gorna Dubnik had been taken, and that on the 28th Telish had surrendered, after having been exposed to three hours' shelling of extreme severity, which had killed or wounded 1,800 men out of 2,800. Sixteen battalions and seventy-two guns had been employed to enforce the capitulation of a place held by six battalions and four guns. Haki Pasha, the commander, had done his utmost; but he was bound to succumb to so terrific a superiority. The Russians had reason to remember the sound beating they had received from this officer on the 24th; hence the despatch of such a ridiculous force. The glory of all these minor actions is entirely on the Turkish side. Even a rabid Russo-maniac must admit that there is no honour attached to the Russian arms in connection with the various engagements around Telish and the two Dubniks,

and, earlier in the campaign, at Lovdcha. The Russians may be deserving of praise for prudence, certainly of none for bravery. They simply swamped us by numbers.

The fall of Gorna Dubnik and Telish was made known to the troops, and, naturally, the news did not tend to improve our spirits. For some hours we were very despondent. But by the following day we had already recovered hope and equanimity, and looked forward with confidence to the future.

The strength of the Plevna army was thus reduced to seventy-two battalions, twenty-one squadrons (exclusive of twelve squadrons of Circassians, most of whom disbanded before the sortie), and eighty-eight guns; or, 40,000 men (deducting 1,500 for loss from all causes in Plevna camp between October 8 and November 1). This was approximately our strength in the beginning of November, after which period disease wrought sad havoc in the Ottoman ranks. From the *ordre de bataille* the Fourth Division was obliterated, Veli Bey's five battalions having been added to the Fifth (now Fourth) Division.

The Russian army of investment, which now surrounded Plevna in a complete circle with a radius of six miles, was composed as follows:—

West Army.

Commander : Prince Charles of Roumania.

Second : General Todleben.

Chief-of-Staff : General Prince Imeretinski.

Right Wing—North Front : Dolna Netropolié to Kanli Tabiya (inclusive).

Commander : General Tchernat.

4 Roumanian divisions and 1 Russian division : 65 battalions, 8 squadrons, 173 guns.

Centre—East and South-east Front : Kanli Tabiya to Tultchenitza Valley east.

Commander : General Sotow.

Ninth (Krüdener's) and Fourth (Sotow's) Corps¹¹⁶ : 33 battalions, 8 squadrons, 146 guns.

Left Wing—South Front: Tultchenitza Valley west to Ternina.

Commander: General Skobelev.

2½ divisions and 1 Chasseur brigade: 25 battalions, 26 squadrons, 88 guns.

West of Plevna—Ternina to Dolna Netropolié.

Commander: General Gourko.¹¹⁷

(See details in previous chapter): 47 battalions, 110 squadrons, 164 guns.

Summary.

	Battalions.	Squads.	Guns.
Right Wing: Tehernat	65	8	173
Centre: Sotow	33	8	146
Left Wing: Skobelev	25	26	88
West: Gourko	47	110	164
Totals	170	152	571 ¹¹⁸

This was the strength of the West Army up to November 15, after which date it was diminished by detachments being sent out, namely, part of Gourko's corps southward, and a Roumanian division westward. I shall briefly deal with these expeditions; but it must be understood that we did not hear of these things in their proper order, nor in their entirety, but only piecemeal, through spies and prisoners, or from the Russian leaders, who were wise enough to inform us of some of these occurrences, mostly by means of newspapers.

Flying detachments from Gourko's force had occupied Teteven on the 2nd, Vratza on the 9th, Radomirtzi, Lukovitza, Yablonitza, and Osikovo between November 2 and 10—all of which were voluntarily evacuated by the Turks. A strong force, under Gourko's personal command, seized the Rosalita Pass on the 17th, Pravetz on the 23rd, Etropol on the 24th. The vanguard of Mehemed Ali's Baba Konak army, stationed in Orkanyé, was compelled to abandon this place; the army retreated to Sofia, with

advanced posts in Tashkessen, Kormatzi, and Strigel. The snow in the Balkans put a stop to the Russian invasion.

Thus the sanguine hopes based on the 'Army of Relief' were shattered; for the second time in the campaign Mehemed Ali turned out a bitter disappointment. All that his forty-three battalions, twenty-eight squadrons, and seventy-two guns could do was to save themselves from being annihilated by Gourko. The relief of Plevna became henceforth an impossibility with that general's corps placed like an impregnable barrier between the besieged and outside help. In these expeditions Gourko acted in contravention of Todleben's plans; but success justified his venture.

We in Plevna never knew the worst, and up to the last day we watched and waited for the appearance of the promised relief, with a longing and a heartache which it is difficult to describe. How acutely a brave and clever man like Chefket, hitherto supreme in Orkanyé, and as such eminently useful, now playing second-fiddle to Mehemed Ali, must have felt his inability to come to the assistance of his chief and friend, Ghazi Osman, who was slowly spending the life-blood of his army, the flower of the nation, without a finger being raised to help him in the terrible hour of need—him who had upheld the honour of his country in a manner to place him on a level with the grand heroes of ancient Greece! Verily, Osman reveals to us a glimpse into a *tragédie humaine* of sublime and awful grandeur. What this man must have felt at the end of November and in the terrible first nine days of December it is impossible to realise. Alone he stood upon the pinnacle of glory which his own genius had raised, while the storms of fate shook and undermined it; not a hand was stretched forth to assist him; at a safe distance his countrymen spent their energies in idle promises, voluble protestations, petty squabbles, useless, long-winded, never-ending preparations; and the world looked on in awe and wonder, with the daily repeated question: 'How long will this last?'

A combined division under the Roumanian Colonel

Slanitcheano, consisting of eight battalions of Roumanian infantry, three regiments of Roumanian and four of Russian cavalry, total 8,000 men, with thirty guns, started from the encampment at Dolna Netropolié on November 20, and arrived before Rahova on the following day. This town was held by five weak battalions—at the utmost 2,000 men—with no cavalry and no field artillery, and only twenty obsolete muzzle-loading fort guns; three redoubts defended the land side, and a roughly built terrace the river bank. On the 21st the Roumanians began to shell, and the Turks responded. After an artillery duel of some hours' duration, in which the antiquated ordnance of the Turks had no chance against the fine Krupp guns of the enemy, and which cost the former 400 killed and wounded, the garrison evacuated the place by a path leading along the river—the Lom Palankah road being held by Roumanians—taking baggage, train, wounded, and some of the guns with them. This path was occupied by a Roumanian battalion, which was surprised and dispersed. The enemy's artillery shelled the retiring column, and the cavalry started in pursuit, so that the Turks had to abandon the heavier vehicles and some of the guns; the latter were pushed into the river. The troops themselves, with the lighter carts, most of the wounded, and three guns, crossed the Skit and the Ogust close to their mouths by means of bridges built with submerged carts and retreated unmolested to Lom Palankah. Twenty carts, with 100 wounded, and one containing the archives of Rahova, fell into the hands of the Roumanians. The Turks lost, altogether, 500 men killed, wounded, and captured; 1,500 men escaped; the Roumanians had 300 killed and wounded. The abandonment of Rahova was unavoidable, the place being not provisioned, insufficiently armed and manned, and untenable, because isolated; the retreat was effected in a skilful and competent manner. The Roumanians made a ridiculous fuss over what they styled grandiloquently the 'storming of Rahova,' whereas in truth the

undertaking was badly planned and badly executed, full of blunders from beginning to end. For allowing the garrison to escape the Roumanian colonel was severely censured and deprived of his command.

The Roumanian division followed the retiring column to Lom Palankah, which it reached, found deserted, and occupied on November 30. The Turks had retreated to Widdin. Here Mehemed Isset Pasha, the commander, prepared himself for the siege, which was commenced by three Roumanian divisions on December 20, and ended with the armistice on February 3, 1878.¹¹⁹

I shall now return to the chronological order of my narrative. Between November 1 and 4 there was silence along both lines. On the latter date the Russians commenced shelling in the west, which continued up to the 9th. After dusk on that day the Russians, led by Skobelev in person, delivered a violent attack upon our south front, especially against Haji Baba and Ghazi Osman Tabiyas, the Brestovitz redoubt, and Kütchük and Yunuz Tabiyas; this was repulsed after furious fighting lasting till midnight. This was the most serious engagement during the investment. The Russians lost 600 men, we 200.

On the following day the enemy renewed the attack on Yunuz Tabiya, and was again unsuccessful.

During the night between the 10th and 11th Ghazi Osman Tabiya was violently, but vainly, stormed. The action lasted till two in the morning.

On the 11th there was heavy shelling along the whole line. We anticipated a general assault, but were disappointed.

On the 12th Skobelev again attacked Ghazi Osman Tabiya, and was beaten off.

On this day a *parlementaire* arrived in Ibrahim Tabiya and summoned Osman to surrender. The latter sent a spirited reply. The correspondence was circulated among the officers; here it is:—

‘ Quartier Général, Porodim :

‘ le 30 Octobre, 1877

(Russian date).

‘ Monsieur le Maréchal,—J’ai l’honneur de communiquer à votre Excellence les faits qui suivent ci-dessous :

‘ Les troupes Ottomanes de Gorna Dubnik et de Telish ont été faites prisonnières. Les armées Russes se sont emparées des positions d’Osikovo et de Vratza. Plevna est entourée par l’armée de l’Ouest, renforcée des corps de la garde impériale et des grenadiers ; les communications sont coupées ; on ne doit plus compter sur aucun ravitaillement. Au nom de l’humanité, et pour éviter une inutile effusion de sang, dont votre Excellence portera seule la responsabilité, je vous invite à cesser toute résistance, et à désigner un endroit où l’on puisse traiter des conditions de la capitulation.

‘ Veuillez accepter, Monsieur le Maréchal, l’assurance de ma très-haute considération.

‘ NICHOLAS,

‘ Commandant-en-chef des armées

‘ Russes en Europe.

‘ A son Excellence le Maréchal
Osman Pasha à Plevna.’

‘ Quartier Général près de Plevna :

‘ le 12 Novembre, 1877

(Western date).

‘ J’ai reçu la lettre datée le 30 Octobre que votre Altesse Impériale a bien voulu m’adresser.

‘ Les troupes impériales, placées sous mon commandement, n’ont pas cessé de faire preuve de courage, de constance et d’énergie. Dans tous les combats livrés jusqu’à ce jour elles ont été victorieuses ; pour cette raison Sa Majesté le Czar s’est vu forcé de faire venir, comme renforts, les corps de la garde impériale et des grenadiers. Les défaites de Gorna Dubnik et de Telish, la capitulation des troupes qui s’y trouvaient, l’interruption des communications, l’occupation des grandes routes, ne sont pas de raisons suffisantes pour que

je sois forcé de rendre mon armée à l'ennemi. Rien ne manque à mes troupes et elles n'ont pas encore fait tout ce qu'elles doivent faire pour sauvegarder l'honneur militaire Ottomane. Jusqu'aujourd'hui nous avons répandu avec joie notre sang pour notre patrie et pour notre foi ; nous continuerons à agir ainsi plutôt que de nous rendre.

'Quant à la responsabilité du sang versé, elle tombe en ce monde, ainsi que dans l'autre, sur ceux qui ont provoqué la guerre.

'Je présente à votre Altesse Impériale l'assurance de ma considération distinguée.

'GHAZI OSMAN,

'Commandant de l'Armée de Plevna.

'A son Altesse Impériale le Grand
Duc Nicholas à Porodim.'

The sentiments expressed in Osman's letter in such noble and dignified language were endorsed and applauded throughout the camp, more particularly the phrase which brings home the responsibility, in this world and in that to come, for the bloodshed to the guilty ; that is, to those who have provoked the war. Osman's attitude, couched in terms moderate but unequivocal, created a very good impression upon the troops, and it cannot have failed to strike also the Russian leaders forcibly.

To the six Cossacks who had escorted the *parlementaire* an ample repast was given, in order to impress them with the wealth of our stores ; whilst their principal was hospitably entertained in Araba Tabiya.

November 13 was an extremely cold day, the severest we had as yet had, with thick fogs. At night Yunuz Tabiya was again unsuccessfully attacked, for the last time ; for from this moment Skobelev gave up all idea of taking the work by storm. The Russians lost 500 men in the action, the Turks barely 100. I understand that the various attacks of Skobelev's corps had been undertaken in contravention of Todleben's orders, many of them probably because, with the

proximity of the hostile lines and the eagerness of the troops on both sides, engagements could not always be avoided.

On the 14th there was shelling along the whole line, so violent that we took it to mean the commencement of another general assault, and made our preparations accordingly. To our disappointment, none took place. At midnight, however, Ghazi Osman Tabiya was unsuccessfully attacked. The fight lasted till daybreak, and cost the Russians 400 men. This was the last of the actions in this quarter.

I append a summary of the infantry engagements during the first half of the investment, with their estimated casualties :—

	Turks.	Russians.
October 27 : Vid bridge	300	400
October 28 : between Ghazi Osman and Pertev Tabiyas	100	100
November 9 : between Haji Baba and Yunuz Tabiyas	200	600
November 10 : Yunuz Tabiya	100	100
November 10 to 11 : Ghazi Osman Tabiya	50	100
November 12 : Ghazi Osman Tabiya	50	100
November 13 : Yunuz Tabiya	100	500
November 14 to 15 : Ghazi Osman Tabiya	100	400
Totals	1,000	2,300

With November 15 ends the first period (one-half) of the investment, which is of a character quite different from that of the second ; for it embraces a number of minor infantry actions, whereas during the second half there was inactivity on both sides, with only one interruption—the engagement at the Vid bridge on December 8. The shelling also partook of the general characteristics of the two periods : it was severe and spasmodically violent in the first, lax and desultory in the second.

As regards my personal adventures during the first half of the investment, the record is a blank. Our wing was not once attacked ; my redoubt received very few shells ;

my battalion had no fighting to do. Twice we were sent to Bash Tabiya, for twenty-four hours each time, coming and going in the middle of the night. The first time (October 30) there was a violent exchange of rifle-fire between the trenches of Bash and Kanli Tabiyas—much ado about nothing, as the men of both sides were in splendidly covered positions. The second time (November 10) the soldiers concluded an unofficial cessation of hostilities for six hours (to the great annoyance—so I heard—of the Russian leaders, who tried to, but could not, control the Roumanians), and I had a long conversation and a smoke with an affable Roumanian lieutenant. The pretended purport of this strange armistice was the burial of some men who had fallen the day before; but as this task was completed in less than an hour, it is probable that the real motive which prompted the Roumanians was that they were getting tired of the petty slaughter constantly going on in the neighbourhood of the two redoubts. We Turks had nothing to lose by such an arrangement; but I believe that my major received a reprimand for giving his sanction. While I was chatting with the Roumanian (I remember that he told me some stories or jokes with equivocal meanings, the latest importations from Paris, of which the points were obscure to me, owing to his knowledge of French being superior to mine) the men followed the example of their betters—talked to each other in snatches of broken Turkish or by comical gestures and signs, consumed biscuits together, and exchanged commodities. Presently other officers joined us; there was quite a *conversazione*, and a common meal, for which mother-earth had provided a thin white tablecloth; and many a hearty laugh went up to the sullen, snow-pregnant sky—laughs that, despite their sincerity, had a mocking ring in my ears. A Sister of the Red Cross passed us on some mission of mercy, whose apparition impressed me much as that of an angel of love and purity might have done. The very camp curs, which ordinarily behaved as if they had a bad conscience, having just done something unusually dirty and disgusting, cruel or cowardly,

furtive, ill-favoured sneaks that they were, shared in the truce, scratched themselves leisurely, or rolled placidly in the half-frozen slush of the tracks. The whole scene was most curious, and strangely at variance with the established notions of warfare.

The service in Bash Tabiya was the severest and cruellest in camp—so severe that lately the two battalions which now formed the guard of the redoubt had to be relieved every twenty-four hours. No man alive could have stood for more than a day such exposure, such a strain, with the enemy's foremost sentries only the width of a road removed from ours—both in their holes, looking like a winter crop of heads growing in devastated fields. The battalions of the First Division took turns in garrisoning the redoubt, two at a time; a regular order of service had been established. Owing to the merciless fire to which the unprotected approaches to the work were exposed, the relief of the redoubt guard had to be effected under cover of darkness. Domestic service, such as cooking, washing, &c., was impossible under the hail of shells and bullets. The men lived on biscuits or maize-bread, and melted snow; when there was no snow there was no water, and the troops had to depend upon that which they had brought with them in their flasks. The superior officers of Adil's division took turns of twenty-four hours each in the command of the redoubt. So dangerous was the service that a man commanded to Bash Tabiya bade farewell to his friends and made his peace with God. Every hour claimed its victims, except when the troops concluded unofficial armistices, such as I have described; for we could not show the point of the hood of our great-coats without attracting a hail of bullets. The periodical cessations of hostilities grew more frequent as time went on: there were three or four a day, lasting from thirty minutes to two hours each, which were utilised on both sides for exchanging sentries.

Towards the middle of November the friendly intercourse between Roumanians and Turks became so notori-

ous, in both camps, that the Russian leaders resolved to relieve the Roumanian garrison of Kanli Tabiya by Russian infantry. This took place about November 18, and after that there was no more truce, either official or unofficial, although on both sides the soldiers generally abstained from firing upon relief parties, as well as upon the foremost sentries.

We had the satisfaction of knowing that we made sojourn in Kanli Tabiya well-nigh unendurable. Roumanian prisoners described the place as a perfect hell. Every gun within shell-range was trained to bear on it, and with the abundance of ammunition, the fine quality of our Krupp guns, and the smartness of our artillerymen, I would rather have been on the brink of an active crater than in the Bloody Battery. Dozens of rifles were levelled at every black speck which looked like belonging to the garments of a human body, and as the distance between the trenches was barely a hundred yards, we did not often miss aim.

Conversation between the sentries, whom only twenty-five yards, or less, separated, was going on continually, as many of the Roumanians understood a little Turkish. In the neighbourhood of the two redoubts digging was done daily, mostly under cover of darkness. If the Roumanians made a fresh trench, a few hours later the Turks were ready with one to counteract it. In the end the zone between and around the two works was a maze of ditches.

On both sides all sorts of devices were resorted to in order to deceive the enemy. We had a set of life-sized, fully clad figures—officer, bugler, ensign, privates, all complete—to attract the hostile rifle-fire. Some had movable joints. On the afternoon of the day on which I was in Bash Tabiya, when the truce had lapsed, we gave the Roumanians a kind of Punch and Judy entertainment, to a horrible accompaniment of drums, cymbals, tin whistles, and bagpipes. They returned the compliment after dark in the shape of a skiagraph performance, on a huge sheet with a fire burning behind. A little drama enacted between the shadows

of a thin man and a woman of monstrous proportions made us laugh heartily.

The sentry service in our own redoubt, as well as throughout camp, was of a cruelly severe character in the rigour of a Bulgarian winter. The original four hours' had to be reduced to two, then to one hour. Fixed, almost buried alive, in a hole four feet deep, with the upper part of the body exposed to the bitter blasts, the lower embedded in the frozen ground, unable to move (the slightest attempt at a trot, the very act of stepping out of the hole, attracted the enemy's bullets), insufficiently fed, compelled to exercise a ceaseless vigilance, struggling against the dangerous drowsiness engendered by frost, the men looked upon sentry-duty as the last refinement of torture. Our splendid great-coats were invaluable to us. When snow was on the ground the cold was less severely felt: snow with ten degrees below freezing-point was better than one or two degrees above the latter without the former. The long, winding line of sentries, lost in the murky distance of a bleak winter day, with only the dark hoods and the bayonets visible on the white ground, presented a grotesque and striking appearance.

By the beginning of November the rations had already been reduced, more particularly as regards meat. Bread made of maize-meal, and baked in Plevna, took the place of biscuits, the large stock of the latter commodity being retained in view of a possible sortie and a march across a famine-stricken country. The total absence of alcoholic beverages and the diminutive quantities of meat made us feel the cold intensely. This grew worse later, when there was no meat at all and the rations became well-nigh insufficient to keep body and soul together. The slaughter of horses or cart-oxen was strictly forbidden; offences were committed in this particular, although such instances were rare. Forage ran short, and the poor beasts suffered severely. The neighing of the horses, and a peculiar groan uttered by the oxen, were almost like articulate language.

On November 16 a horse had been killed in my redoubt

which had broken a leg on the slippery ground. I partook of a portion which a well-disposed private offered to me. It was insufficiently salted—salt being scarce—and brought on violent diarrhoea, with spasms and agonising pains. Once more I was packed off to town in a cart, and transported to the hospital in the mosque, where I spent eight days of unutterable miseries, among 400 fellow-sufferers.

There was a deficiency of drugs: quinine was almost entirely absent. Lint was wanting: garments had to be cut up for bandages, however much clothing of every description was in demand. Linen rags were treasured as priceless. During the last few days of the investment wounds could not be bound up afresh for want of material. Convalescents had no strengthening food, and numbers succumbed to weakness. The doctors and surgeons were so overworked that they could not give the necessary attention to individual cases. Invalids quarrelled and even fought for precedence. Doctor Lange told me, on December 9, that he had not taken off his clothes for four weeks, and had had no more than three hours' sleep per night.

Of what the wounded and the sick suffered I was to have a taste during my second sojourn in the mosque; and it must be remembered that things in the middle of November were not nearly so bad as they became in December. My first experience in this purgatory had been horrible enough; the second simply baffles description. I contemplated suicide. On the fourth day Jack Seymour, also stricken down, joined me, and we upheld and comforted each other. Doses of brandy and some opium preparation brought me round sooner than the doctor had expected, and on the ninth day (November 24) I returned to my redoubt, during a snow-storm, on a creature, borrowed from a Circassian, so miserably lean that it had almost lost the shape of a horse, which broke down when I had got as far as Yeni Tabiya, and was immediately pounced upon, killed, and cut up for cooking by the soldiers of this work. I had to tramp, or rather crawl, the rest of the way, and fell down twice: for the diarrhoea

had left me exhausted, and the frozen slopes rendered locomotion difficult to even the strongest. The second time I made, in my misery, no effort to get up, praying for deliverance, with the flakes whirling around me and threatening to bury me alive. Some men found me, and took me to my redoubt. Tereb had meanwhile commanded the company, being the only active officer left; for—so I heard to my grief—Lieutenant Azif had been killed in the trenches of Bash Tabiya, whither my battalion had been sent for a day during my illness. I begged Ibrahim, tired to death by his manifold duties, to retain the command until the following day, lay down on my primitive couch, and slept for sixteen hours, tormented by ugly dreams, cold, hunger, and evil forebodings. A young private of my company nursed me with a mother's tenderness. The men were fond of me; in fact, the major said once that I was the most popular officer in the division, of which fact I had a striking proof on the following day, when they made up an abundant meal for me—each contributing a mite of his dinner—consisting of maize, porridge, bread, a few biscuits, and a little boiled mutton, the last meat I tasted during the campaign. This repast, added to my own ration, with some brandy obtained from my girl-friend in town, restored my strength to a wonderful degree, and next morning I resumed command of the company, much to Tereb's relief, who had not slept for forty-eight hours. He fell with fatigue, and had to be carried to his sleeping-quarters. The sun shone for a few hours, for a wonder, and this may have contributed to my speedy recovery. From this day until the night after the surrender—fifteen days—I never took my clothes off.

Whilst I was in the hospital the report of the fall of Kars had spread through the town like wildfire, penetrating even to the fever-haunts. I learnt now that on November 27 the Russians had affixed placards on poles in front of the Turkish redoubts, which, taken down by our sentries, were found to contain the following inscription in ungrammatical, ill-spelt, and badly written Turkish:—

‘Kars has been taken, and Moukhtar Pasha’s army has surrendered. You are surrounded on all sides, and cut off from every possibility of escape and succour. Your Sovereign wishes to make peace ; it is only Osman Pasha who retains you here. Surrender, and preserve your lives for your families. If you do not, you will die of starvation. You have done your best, and nothing more can be expected of you.’

On the same day the Russians had fired artillery volleys, and had, after dark, huge illuminated inscriptions in some of their redoubts, setting forth in French and Turkish that Kars had fallen.

Such fatal news could not fail to create a bad, and even dangerous, impression on the common soldiers ; but the effect wore off speedily.

Jack did not join us until the beginning of December. He fell ill in the redoubt the evening of his arrival, and I nursed him throughout the night. His head rested on my arm for many weary hours. I thought it was all over with him ; but towards morning he quieted down, and slept profoundly until noon, when he awoke much refreshed. The soldiers made up a goodly meal for him—without meat, however, as we had none—and he recovered, and became quite strong and cheerful.

The town was one vast hospital in those days. Every other house had been transformed into an ambulance ; each mosque and public building was filled with fever-stricken men. There were 8,000 invalids in a town built to accommodate 17,000 inhabitants ; in December the number increased to 10,000. The Turkish residents behaved very well, giving every assistance in their power ; some of the women even abandoned the restraint placed on them by custom and religion, and tended the sick. As to the Christians, they continued up to the end in their brutality and indifference to suffering, and in their treachery, whenever they had a chance of being treacherous without being found out.

The deterioration in the value of money was a striking

feature. For instance, in playing at dominoes, or with improvised dice, or other games, we used to stake biscuits, and a biscuit-stake was considered equal to quite ten piastres (1s. 10*d.*). Even quarter-biscuits were gambled for. The stakes were consumed as soon as won. In town I paid to a crafty Slavonian Jew, who had hoarded up a secret treasure of preserves, twenty-five piastres for four ounces of execrable tinned beef, and the same price for a cup of Liebig's meat extract. A cigarette fetched ten piastres, an egg as much as twenty piastres; such transactions, however, were conducted in secret, for hawking articles of consumption was prohibited.

By the beginning of December my company was reduced to ninety combatants, including three officers (Seymour, Tereb, and myself). Not a day passed without someone being stricken down and carted off to town.

The interment of those who died in the hospitals became a matter of such importance and magnitude that a special service had to be organised for this work.

I have already said that meat was not dealt out after November 25. Towards the end of the month the rations were reduced further, and up to December 6 we had for our daily sustenance a quantity of unpalatable maize bread equal to ten ounces, and a small portion of thin maize gruel, tasting sickly on account of the absence of salt. Thus a meal smaller than the average Briton's breakfast had to do duty for a whole day. Tobacco had run out long since, and when my girl-friend procured me a couple of cigarettes, I cut them in halves and gave Seymour, Tereb, and Bakal a piece each. I knew a colonel who would have paid me fifty piastres for them. Of tea there was, I believe, not an ounce in town or camp; in fact, from the time of my last visit to Widdin, when Doris had given me a cup, up to the evening of surrender, when the Russian officers treated me, I saw none. The Turks are not tea-drinkers; I knew men who had never tasted this beverage. Coffee there was none—at least, none for us, though it was said that the superior officers still received occasional doles. A friend of mine got hold some-

where of a minute quantity, and dealt out his treasure in spoonfuls. A cup of coffee would have fetched almost any price ; but then, money was quite as scarce as most commodities. In my redoubt I was, I believe, the only man, except the brigadier, who possessed cash. I had sixty liras of my own when we arrived in Plevna ; up to the end of August I had spent ten, from September 1 to October 24 fifteen, during the investment thirty. Ahmed Hifzi and Chefket Pashas were said to have brought large amounts to Plevna, sums of 80,000 and 100,000 liras being mentioned ; and in October we were astonished to receive our pay in hard cash ; but this soon ceased.¹²⁰

Firewood was entirely absent. In the southern and western sections of the camp the vines and the fruit-trees were dug up and used as fuel, having hitherto been protected by the Mushir's order ; but necessity knows no master. Shrubs and branches were sent to us now and then ; these, with dried grass and herbs, maize straw, pieces of furniture, boards taken from the sleeping-quarters (at a sacrifice of safety and comfort), demolished articles of any description as long as they were of combustible material), and nondescript rubbish, with, now and then, a cart surreptitiously broken up, constituted our fuel. Sometimes we could not make our maize porridge because we had no fire. What this means with the thermometer below freezing-point, and not a drop of spirits to be had for love or money, I leave to the reader's imagination. Once or twice Bakal, more indefatigable than ever, and whose wits seemed to increase in proportion to the difficulties, procured for the battalion a few buckets of atrocious coal ; but there were no stores and no regular distributions of this article. Sentry-stalking was not countenanced, being considered cowardly and brutal ; but one night some Circassians attached to my redoubt crept up on their stomachs to the enemy's sentinels, stabbed several, one after the other, and carried away from an outpost a number of faggots and large blocks of wood, when we had a fire that was for days afterwards the talk of the camp. Turf was cut for fuel, but proved a failure.

Soap we had not ; I washed myself with soft clay. With candles we had to be extremely economical ; frequently there was no material for artificial light. Matches were so scarce that to light fires cartridges were exploded. The only commodity which was abundant was ammunition, and that we could not eat, although some extraordinary things were consumed.

The vagrant dogs died by the score. Wolves showed themselves in the neighbourhood. Crows and ravens were shot, and much prized as delicacies.

Our garments were in tatters ; only the great-coats retained the semblance of human clothing. The stock of uniforms and under-clothing in Plevna had been exhausted by the end of November. I learnt subsequently that a convoy with 20,000 fur capes and 40,000 pairs of boots had been sent from Orkanyé towards the end of October, just too late to penetrate the hostile lines. All sorts of devices were resorted to in order to add to the rags that covered us : garments were made up of skins, paper, sacking ; straw and dead leaves were stuffed into cushions and fastened around the body. Happy he who could procure a woman's skirt or petticoat ; the inventive skill born of necessity soon transformed it into a jacket or a vest, or even a pair of breeches. The costumes of some men included half a dozen articles of female attire ; the very trousers worn by Turkish ladies were not disdained. In the patching up of clothing some evinced considerable ingenuity : one man in my redoubt, a perfect genius, obtained such a reputation and had so much work to do that he got dispensation from all other duties. Many garments presented a curious conglomeration of colours and materials, with but the faintest indication of the original stuff remaining under accumulated repairs. Russian and Roumanian uniforms taken from corpses were much sought after ; many a Turkish great-coat concealed a complete set of these. The boots would hardly hold together ; they were stitched, and mended, and stitched again, until one could not tell where the original material ended and the patching

commenced. Hides were made up into footgear of grotesque shape and uncomfortable wear. Happily, I had the boots I had brought with me from Berlin, of which one pair was still in tolerable condition. Socks were almost entirely absent; rags were wound around the feet. The shoes and laced gaiters of those troops who were clad Zouave fashion were considered superior to the ordinary European foot-covering—both safer and more comfortable on ice and snow. With the execrable condition of the roads and tracks, the bad state of the footgear was one of the greatest hardships; in the dry snow of the fields, or when the frost created a hard crust on the ground, the men suffered less.

The *camaraderie*, kindness, and general good-fellowship which obtained among both officers and men were beyond praise. Quarrels were few and far between. Even in direst adversity order and discipline suffered little. The Draconic orders issued from headquarters during the second half of the investment, for the purpose of maintaining the absolutely indispensable discipline under exceptionally trying conditions, were hardly ever called into play; but they made the troops feel that an indomitable will directed and an iron hand governed them. Cases of disobedience and disrespect were rare; of open disorder, conspiracy, or premeditated rebellion there was not an instance. Where an officer was popular with his men they followed his orders and advice blindly, and, in return for a little consideration and thoughtfulness, they would display great unselfishness and self-sacrificing kindness. But we had some deserters now; there were two in my company, both recruits who had been incorporated in it after the second battle. The Russian reports of wholesale desertions are fabrications. There were—Circassians excepted—not more than 200, all told, from first to last; that is, an average of three per battalion in four and a half months, say one per thousand per month. I believe that not a single man deserted among those who had come with Osman from Widdin; these, the Serbian veterans, clung to their beloved leader with unbounded confidence and devotion. The troops who had arrived from

Sofia in September and October were the principal offenders, the Mustafiz battalions foremost. The Circassians deserted wholesale—disbanded, in fact: of the twelve squadrons which we had on October 24, there were on December 10 not more than 200 men left. These gentry were looked upon throughout camp with the utmost contempt and distrust, and were given up as incorrigible. Not an officer but said from the bottom of his heart: 'Would to God they had never formed part of the Turkish Army,' to which they were a standing reproach, associating, as they did, brave, honest, and disciplined soldiers with a name that stinks in the nostrils of newspaper-readers; for it was they who gave rise to the Bashi-Bazouk *canards*. Their thieving propensities were incredible. Not the most secret place of the mud huts was safe from their lynx eyes and their greedy fingers. I declare they smelt out the spots where men hid their little treasures of unconsumed victuals. Food, clothing, money—all was grist to their mill.

Unfortunately, uncleanness was rampant, regulations and penalties notwithstanding; but I presume that this vice is well-nigh unavoidable under such circumstances.

In spite of privation and suffering, the troops were full of courage and confidence, and positively more cheerful than they had been in prosperity, when the characteristic apathy of the race is more in evidence. One idea comforted and upheld us to the very last day: that the Army of Relief would soon arrive, and that then the Russians would have a beating of the first magnitude. How we watched and waited, and longed and hoped, and how ardently some of those Mussulmen prayed! I was told that the duty in the observatories in the southern redoubts was much sought after, because each man wanted to be the first to signal the advent of the deliverer. 'Any news from Krishin?' 'Have they seen smoke on the Orkanyé road?' 'Have they heard guns in the south?' Such questions were asked daily times out of number. The camp-wires flashed anxious inquiries and disheartening replies to and fro. Many were the false alarms, the bitter disappointments. 'They must be here to-morrow

—they cannot possibly tarry any longer,' we said each hour ; and the morrow came, and with it another day of dreary waiting, of uncertainty, anxiety, and sickening suspense. 'Why do not the English help us? We have counted on them, and have been given to understand that they would assist us; and now they leave us in the lurch. Are they afraid of the Russians?' These questions were constantly asked.

In connection with the camp-wires I must mention a curious occurrence. On one of the last days in November, when the sky was clear for a few hours and the ground hard, I thought that a walk would do me good, obtained leave, and tramped to one of the Bukova redoubts, where I had a friend. The latter took me to the telegraph-office. The wire being disengaged and the redoubt commander absent, the operator sent for us the inquiry, 'Any news?' to, I think, Pertev Tabiya. The reply was: 'An Englishman in civilian's clothes has arrived under a flag of truce, and is now engaged with the Mushir. What he wants we do not know.' Next day, in a thick fog, Osman inspected some of the redoubts—an unusual occurrence, for he was not personally very active—and was accompanied by this gentleman, an official from headquarters serving as interpreter. I have never learnt what was his name, business, or mission, or what became of him eventually.

During my illness there had been a few days' violent cannonade, the centre redoubts (Ibrahim, Omer, Atouf, Ikhtihat Tabiyas), the Opanetz redoubts, and the Vid bridge being the Russian gunners' objective. A perfect hail of shells had been directed against the bridge, but it was never hit. This is miraculous, considering that a few well-directed projectiles could have demolished the shaky stone structure of antiquated and picturesque appearance.

The cannonade ceased on the 20th, and from this date up to December 8 there was little shelling on either side, and no fighting.

Thrice more my battalion was sent to Bash Tabiya.

The Russians were now in possession at the Bloody Battery, the Roumanians having moved the bulk of their force westward, and directed their attention to the Opanetz redoubts, which they had shelled violently for a few days.

Nothing worth mentioning happened in Bash Tabiya. The hunting down (on both sides) of any man who showed the smallest discernible corner of his body went on as before, but no actual fighting took place. In fact, since the desperate encounter of October 19 the enemy had made no attempt to take Bash Tabiya by storm, and the Turkish commanders were, once for all, instructed to initiate no engagements.

The dates of my duties in Bash Tabiya were November 27 and December 3 (twenty-four hours each time), and December 8 (four hours). On the latter day the Russians made an abortive attempt to surprise the Vid bridge guard. This was the only infantry engagement during the second half of the investment. On the 8th there was little, and on the 9th no shelling.

Meanwhile the situation had become desperate. The Plevna camp was one vast cemetery, with the town for its central charnel-house. An army of 40,000 men was slowly dying of exposure, privation, and illness. The weather grew worse and worse; the cold became intense. The mortality was appalling. There was hardly a man who was not suffering from something or other—exhaustion, fever, dysentery, rheumatism, ague, bronchitis, galloping consumption, open wounds, frostbites, broken limbs. A cholera-like affection and a contagious influenza claimed many victims. There were also cases of small-pox, typhoid fever, diphtheria, even leprosy and insanity; there were deaths from starvation and exposure. Under these circumstances the fact that we were almost devoured by parasites seemed a trifle.

On one of the last days in November my major handed me copies of the 'Times,' 'Daily News,' and 'Standard,' part of the contents of some parcels of newspapers which had arrived by *parlementaire* a few days before, some sent

by the Grand Duke to Ibrahim Tabiya, others by Gourko to the Vid bridge. I was told that the Mushir had acknowledged these civilities with the remark that the papers would be found useful in the long winter evenings. I read that Kars had been taken by storm in the night of November 17 to 18 ; that Suleiman Pasha had tried vainly to overthrow the barrier placed in his way by the Czarevitch's army ; that Reuf Pasha was unable to force the Shipka Pass, and was condemned to idleness by the snow in the Balkans. It was clear that the Ottoman Empire was gasping in its death-agonies. Greedily, but vainly, I scanned the columns in search of any indication that England was coming to the rescue of her former ally. No, Britannia had her hands in her lap, and the British lion wagged his tail amicably and peacefully. Europe looked on in awe and wonder at the glorious stand made by the dying country. Russia, Roumania, and Montenegro had united to overthrow it ; Servia and Greece were waiting to administer a few kicks to the fallen foe when they could safely do so ; and not a hand was raised among the nations of the earth to help the country overwhelmed with misfortune ; not a light shone into this awful darkness, except that which burned within us, and which death alone can extinguish.

In spite of all these disasters crowding upon us there was but one voice in camp : 'No surrender.' After nearly two months' virtual inactivity we longed for a goodly fight, for the fair chance of a battle-field ; daily and hourly the necessity of making a supreme effort to break through the iron ring that held us in bondage became more apparent. We simply yearned for a battle ; and this feeling increased in intensity when, on the last day of November, it became known that there was but a fortnight's food-supply left in Plevna, even with the present rations reduced already to the lowest practicable minimum. So acute became this desire for activity, for one more chance to cross swords with an enemy composed of flesh and blood, in lieu of wrangling with spectres which we could not grasp, that I verily believe it would have

led to rebellion had Osman not given way to it—an impossible supposition.

On December 1 a council of war was summoned to headquarters, comprising all officers commanding divisions, brigades, and regiments. At noon on this day our major called the officers of his battalion together, and told us that his colonel had desired him to ascertain our opinions on the following questions, which were those the council of war would be asked to decide:—

‘ Shall we remain in Plevna until food is exhausted, and surrender when there is nothing more to eat? ’ or

‘ Shall we make a desperate attempt to force the lines of investment? ’

Of thirteen officers, eleven answered ‘ No ’ to the first, and ‘ Yes ’ to the second question, whilst two replied in the reverse sense. Tereb and I voted with the majority. Seymour was still laid up; he joined us, I think, next day.

With this message our colonel departed to headquarters, and returned in the evening looking grave and gloomy. We learnt from the major that the council had arrived at no decision, and had adjourned until the following day; that Osman himself was in favour of a sortie, but that many officers shrank from taking upon themselves the responsibility of the frightful bloodshed which the action would engender.

‘ Let no man deceive himself, ’ Osman had said, ‘ as to the chances of success of such an attempt. They are infinitesimal. But I think that the honour of our country and the fair fame of our army render it incumbent upon us to make a last and supreme effort. ’

On the 2nd the council met again, and in the evening we learnt that it had decided unanimously in favour of the sortie. A protocol had been drawn up, and signed by all the members of the assembly.

Thrice more the council met (on December 3, 4, and 5) in order to discuss the details of the venture. There was

much speculation in camp as to the direction in which the sortie was to be made, and when we learnt, on the 5th, that the Vid bridge had been decided upon, we applauded the Mushir's wisdom; for the Orkanyé road, barred by Gourko's Corps, offered not the slightest chance of success, and there was no other alternative.

It was the Mushir's intention—so we learnt—to cross the Isker at Mahulleta, proceed to Berkovitz, thence by the Ghintzi Pass to Sofia, and to join hands there with Mehemed Ali's army. Had the venture succeeded, the garrison of Widdin and those along the Servian frontier would also have concentrated in Sofia, where the Sultan would thus have had an army of 140 to 150 battalions at his disposal. Had Reuf Pasha's Shipka corps been united to this there would have been an army of 200 battalions, seventy squadrons, and 300 guns (100,000 men, three-fourths of whom were hardened and experienced troops) for the defence of East Roumelia, granted that Sofia had been abandoned, which was—so I heard—Osman's idea.

The reader can have no conception of the magic influence exercised upon the men's spirits by the prospects of action. Eagerness to fight and hope of success intoxicated us. We were cheerful, and even merry; sick men recovered, aches and pains vanished; it almost looked as if wounds closed of their own accord. The officers were enjoined to maintain the men in this condition by all the powers at their command, and conscientiously we did our best. In those days I chattered more nonsense than it fell to my lot to utter during the remainder of my life, not excepting the periods (fatally frequent) when I was in love or wanted to negotiate a loan. Jack particularly was in a state of the wildest excitement, and his enthusiasm, boisterous merriment, and fine animal spirits affected us all. Ibrahim worked manfully and did his duty nobly, but he had to contend against a small, still voice whispering of death, which refused to be silenced.

The sortie had originally been fixed for December 9, but

owing to a false report of the approach of the 'Army of Relief' it was delayed for twenty-four hours. The Mushir's *Ordre du Jour*, which I shall quote verbally in the next chapter, was given out on the 7th, with the date left open. On this day, as also on the two following days, in addition to our ordinary ten ounces of maize bread, full biscuit rations and the material for making a goodly portion of gruel were dealt out, in order to increase our strength and prepare us for the ordeal that stood before us. Besides the food for the day, six days' biscuit rations were given to each man for the march. When the distribution of the biscuits to the battalions had been made the Plevna stores were exhausted.

These arrangements, and those I shall mention hereafter, necessitated a good deal of journeying to and fro. To deceive the Russians, who, like ourselves, had observatories on all prominent points, it was commanded that movements of troops, and also, as far as practicable, the marches of small detachments and trains, and even the journeys of single men, were to be made under cover of darkness. Five times I tramped to Plevna and back in those days, either at dusk or in the early morning, before sunrise. Gruesome journeys the latter were, in the bleak and ugly winter dawn, with snow on the ground and the cold air freezing your very breath. I could have borrowed a horse; but being now quite well, my legs were a good deal stronger than those of the half-starved brutes, and more reliable on the slippery ground. On each occasion I was met in Plevna by my girlfriend, who did me many an important service. At midnight, at three in the morning, in the early dawn—whatever the hour—she was at the place of tryst, and always had something to give me—a cigarette, a drop of brandy, a loaf. It would lead too far to enumerate the extraordinary ruses she employed to deceive her father. She was cheerful, gentle, and a real comforter. It has been my lot to meet in Turkey two of the best specimens of true womanhood—one a Jewess, the other a Mahomedan. I have known hundreds of Western

Christian women, of all classes and many nationalities, but, outside my family circle, only one who could compare with these half-educated girls in heroism, patience, and sacrifice of self. True, there were never again such opportunities for the display of the finest qualities of heart and head; but the fact remains that in an Eastern Jewess of nineteen and a Turkish girl of seventeen I have met my ideals of perfect womanhood.

It was necessary that the Russians should have no notice of our plans, and with this object strict orders were given to let no Bulgarian pass beyond our lines. We had to be extremely vigilant, for lately the treacherous instincts of the Christians had been more than ordinarily apparent. It was well known in camp that the Russians remunerated anyone who brought them information of our doings. Notwithstanding our watchfulness, some Bulgarians must have escaped; for I read in Kuropatkin that the Russians were kept by informers *au courant* of all that was passing in Plevna camp, and were prepared for the sortie, although somewhat in the dark as to time and direction.

The Turkish residents of Plevna were determined to accompany Osman on his retreat. Of the two evils—the dangers and hardships of a sortie and a forced winter march on one hand, and to trust themselves, wives, families, and belongings to the infuriated and uncontrolled Bulgarians on the other—the latter was by far the worst. The leaders of the Turkish community had several interviews with the Mushir; they had thrown themselves at his feet, and implored him with tears to save them from the Christians, who would be certain to display that murderous cruelty for which the rebellion of 1876 and the present war had rendered them notorious. Naturally, Osman had shrunk from hampering his army by a train of at least 500 families; but at length he had yielded to their pitiful appeal. What a hideous mockery it is that to obey the dictates of humanity should constitute an offence against an exact science (*i.e.* strategy)—which was undoubtedly the case in this instance;

for had not the army been fettered by that cumbersome burden, it is quite possible that the sortie might have succeeded.

The girl's father had formed one of the deputation that had waited upon the Mushir, and from her graphic account I gathered that the scene at the first interview, when Osman peremptorily refused to accede to the request addressed to him, had been heart-rending. Vainly Osman had pointed out that the man whose humanity had liberated the serfs in his own domain would not allow the peaceful inhabitants of a conquered town to be ill-treated; the fury of the Bulgarian mob, when once let loose, and the brutality of the Russian common soldiers, were too well known. There is no hatred so intense as race hatred, no cruelty so refined as religious cruelty. All honour to the Mushir that he finally gave way, and consented to protect his luckless co-religionists, even at the risk of forging a chain for his own feet.

To ensure the safety of the worst of the wounded and the invalids, whom it would be necessary to leave behind, the Mushir had summoned the priests and the elders of the Bulgarian community, and made them swear on the Bible and the crucifix that no outrage should be committed by the Christians upon the helpless inmates of the hospitals. The oath was solemnly taken, and violated, after the collapse of the sortie, in a manner for which no words of indignation could be sufficiently severe; almost all the sick and wounded were butchered, and the Russians made no attempt to interfere. In the name of the Saviour the Bulgarians had sworn to protect those who had been laid low in the defence of *their* homes and *their* country, and in the name of the Saviour they slaughtered them.

I met this girl for the last time in the early dawn of December 9. Never shall I forget the utter desolation of the scene and the misery of that stolen interview. Imagine a town, which four months before had been one of the prettiest and most prosperous of the country, transformed into a gigantic overcrowded, neglected hospital. A wretched, utterly

despondent, plague-stricken, ruined, starving town, where men called upon their Maker, in hopeless despair, to relieve them of their sufferings, whilst their children cried aloud in the agony of hunger, and women huddled together in tearless misery. Night and day knew no difference as far as the traffic of the streets was concerned; for the dead had to be interred at all hours, and the preparations for our sortie necessitated a constant feverish activity. So great was the mortality, that in families and households a death excited hardly any comment and little feeling. Barely a house but had its quota of sick or wounded soldiers; sheds, stables, anything with a roof to it, had been turned into ambulances; no attendance could be given, no medicine administered, no fires lighted; and gaunt figures, with hollow cheeks and desperate, burning eyes, sought for food among disgusting heaps of offal. Hideous diseases raged unchecked, and did more ravage in a day than the Russian guns did in a week. To all the senses the town of Plevna was a savage abomination—to the sense of smell, by the stench of unclean fever hospitals, filthy, neglected streets, rotting carcasses; to the hearing, by the sounds of agonising cries and groans on all sides; to the sight, because wherever your eyes rested you saw either the preparations for a last gigantic slaughter, or else the evidences of such miseries as only war can entail upon a populace that can have no manner of concern with the quarrels of those who have provoked it—the rulers, courtiers, and politicians. The very air tasted of corruption; and whatever your fingers touched, shrubs, rails, walls, was covered with the slime of melting snow, like the cold sweat of anguish on the body of a nation decaying but still alive.

Misery and starvation notwithstanding, civil administration was carried on as efficiently as in times of peace, and continued so until the end. The inhabitants of either faith, and their belongings (even victuals), were rigorously protected, excesses on the part of soldiers severely punished. Justice was administered, and its decrees executed, with severity

certainly, but with an impartiality for which Osman, who was now also supreme civil head, and Hussein Bey, the Governor of Plevna, cannot be sufficiently praised. It speaks well for Osman's administration, that in a besieged and starving town, inhabited by a dual populace, and confessing to a dual faith, there was in seven weeks' of investment never as much as a riot or any premeditated act of violence. The departure of the Turkish army handed the town over to the Christians—that is, to murder, outrage, rape, robbery, plunder, sacrilege, all of which thrived exceedingly well under the Bulgarian *régime*, until the Russians established something faintly resembling order a week or so after the surrender.

We met at a corner of the garden, where there was a dogs' kennel, the inmates of which had died of starvation, and, unburied, were sending forth a stench that attracted a crazy crew of carrion crows and croaking ravens. So ferocious were these birds in their disgusting greed that our approach did not disturb their ghastly labours. The girl had donned the garments usually worn by an old woman of her acquaintance, and affected a stoop to avoid detection. Some evergreen shrubs hid us from the soldiers who were continually passing in the street, with corpses bound up in scanty sackings—for there was no wood for coffins, and the raiment of the dead was always utilised—or with carts of arms or ammunition on their way to some redoubt. The sullen dawn of a winter day shed a ghastly pale, colourless light, that gave to all things a hideously unearthly aspect, and with the snow-laden roofs and trees made the surroundings appear as if they belonged to another world. The sky was of a leaden grey colour. Snow had fallen during the night, but it was thawing now, and the snow became mud. There was an incessant dripping from the leafless trees, and on the ground the falling drops performed melodies like mocking funeral dirges. In the road, a shivering wretch in tatters was raking up a rubbish-heap in search of scraps of offal that might serve as food; two little outcast urchins,

Bulgarians by their ragged garments, toddled through the slush, hand-in-hand, crying, but happy in the possession of a mud-begrimed crust, whilst a mangy cur followed them with hungry eyes and felonious intent; and a woman, with an evidently dying baby at a breast that refused to yield sustenance, stumbled along, bewildered in her indescribable misery. These sights affected me; for I had not been in London yet at that time, where I have since grown hardened.

The girl had a cup of steaming hot sugared water, with just the flavour of brandy in it, and a piece of bread. A window of the house was opened, and the ambulance assistant thrust out the bloody contents of a basin. I heard the peculiar grating sound of a surgical saw working its way through the bones of a leg or arm. We exchanged hurriedly the latest news, and then she had to leave me—and thirty-six hours later a Russian shell had sent her to her last account!

The evacuation of a camp and a march likely to last a fortnight involved an amount of preparation of which the lay reader can form no idea. During the five days between December 5th and 9th I was busier than I had been at any time during the campaign. I have nothing but admiration for the methodical and competent manner in which our preparations were planned and carried out. From first to last there was never a hitch. Every part of this huge machinery of wheels within wheels, worked smoothly and efficiently. Each detail was carefully attended to; every man laboured with a will, inspired by hope and enthusiasm, and Osman's truly grand plan was executed in a manner which would have done credit to even the practically perfect organisation of the German Army.

Our preparations were so numerous and manifold that it is impossible to record, or even remember, them all. Of the food-supply I have already spoken. Here are the main features of our arrangements:—

The cash was distributed in equal parts, eighty liras

to the battalion, if I remember correctly. I received seventy-five piastres (14s.). I had five liras of my own left.

Our standard was burned. Silently and reverently we watched the flames—which, for economy's sake, were utilised for cooking our porridge—devour the venerable rag that had preceded the battalion for fifty years, which had carried honourably the sign of the Crescent at Giurgevo, Silistria, Eupatoria, and Sebastopol, which had fluttered beside me in the bayonet-charge of the second battle, and in the treble assault on Kavanlik during the September holocaust: 1828 to 1877—five decades of history consumed in less minutes. And as in sadness we scattered the ashes to the winds, we felt as if the Half-moon itself had fallen from its high estate, and was swallowed by the blast that, chilly and moaning, driving snowflakes and misty vapours before it, came to us from the dreary northern plains.

There being an abundance of arms in Plevna, and in order to diminish the quantity which we should have to leave behind (buried or hidden), the drummers, buglers, train-soldiers, and non-combatants generally, and also the gunners, received rifles. To some of the cavalry squadrons lances taken from dead or captured Cossacks were dealt out. To us officers were given Winchester repeating carbines. I was formidably armed: I had my sword, with an edge as keen as a razor's; two six-chambered revolvers, the carbine, and a beautiful dagger, two feet long, of Damascene workmanship, which I had taken from a dead officer of Circassians, many of whom carried such weapons. I had 100 cartridges for the revolvers, and eighty for the carbine.

Each man carried 130 cartridges, eighty in the pouch and fifty in the haversack. Each battalion had a reserve stock of 180,000 cartridges (or 450 per man, taking the average at 400 men per battalion), in 180 boxes of 1,000 each. There were 300 shots per gun and two or three ammunition carts per battery.

Every rifle was taken to pieces, inspected, cleaned, oiled,

tested. The bayonets were sharpened ; the men had two each, one sword-shape, and one of the ordinary kind.

For the transport of ammunition, water, forage, tents, tools, blankets, and baggage we had per battalion sixty pack-horses and twelve carts drawn each by two oxen, with three oxen as reserve. The packhorses were in such an enfeebled condition that three-fourths of them could carry no more than two boxes of cartridges. The cart-wheels and those of the gun-carriages were greased and bound up with straw, so as to render their action noiseless.

As the battalions which had come with Osman from Widdin had not brought tents with them, a redistribution of these was made, resulting in a share of thirty per battalion. A sufficient number of lanterns was dealt out to each company.

The remainder of the salt, sugar, and quinine was distributed, and in each company a few reliable men were appointed to carry and manage the trifling quantities of these articles destined for the men placed under them for this purpose. Boots were dealt out to those who needed them most—not new ones, but pairs taken from dead men or invalids. To each man was given a small quantity of linen rags, to serve as bandages for light wounds or sore feet. The sergeants and corporals had doses of ointment for the same purpose.

To protect the march of the army across the Vid a number of small fortifications had been erected in the rear, extending in a semicircle east of the bridge ; and two auxiliary wooden bridges had been built between the stone bridge and Opanetz. Special measures had been taken to keep these works concealed from the enemy ; but I do not believe that we succeeded in this.

From each battalion three officers were selected, with orders to make themselves thoroughly familiar with the roads and the country between town and bridges. During one of my recent visits to Plevna, on which I had been accompanied by two lieutenants from other companies of my battalion, we had spent several hours in the early morning in examining

this neighbourhood, drawing rough plans, and making ourselves familiar with the surroundings, so as to be able to lead the battalion.

Lay-figures were manufactured, dressed up, and posted in the trenches and behind the parapet of the redoubt, so as to deceive the enemy.

All the wounded, save those whose feet or legs had been amputated or whose condition was hopeless, and all the sick, except those who were actually dying or who suffered from dangerously contagious diseases, were to accompany the army. The doctors in Plevna had their work cut out in making the selection. Those that could not walk—about 1,000—were to be accommodated in carts; all that could keep themselves on their legs had to serve as drivers and escort to the huge train, and by this means the number of actual fighters was greatly increased. There were 6,000 of these convalescent non-combatants.

Those sick and wounded who had to be left behind (800) were brought together in the largest houses of the principal streets, with a foreign surgeon, several assistants, and a number of convalescents to attend upon them, and ten days' biscuits to sustain them. We knew beforehand what their fate would be, in the hands of the Christian populace, during the time that would necessarily elapse between the departure of the Turkish and the entry of the Russian troops.

Three hundred carts were to accommodate the women and children of the Turkish inhabitants, the men acting as drivers. The officers of the General Staff had to prevent the people from hampering themselves and the army by carrying furniture and lumber. In those redoubts which were to be abandoned the observatories were to be demolished, so that they should not be used by the Russians. For the same reason the telegraph-wires were to be destroyed. We had six lines, starting from headquarters, to Bash Tabiya, Bukova, Opanetz, Yunuz Tabiya, Pertev Tabiya, and the Vid bridge redoubt.

The night of the 8th to the 9th was employed through-

out the camp in packing the ammunition, water, forage, and baggage on the carts. The latter, with two-thirds of the packhorses, were to be sent to the hill immediately east of the Vid bridge, which was the general rendezvous for both the train and the artillery. This place was not exposed to the hostile shells. Most of the guns were to be sent thither at dusk (that is, starting from the redoubts between four and five), whilst the infantry, with the rest of the packhorses and the remaining artillery, was to leave the redoubts and take up position during the night. The commencement of the attack was fixed for daybreak on the 10th.

The troops were sanguine and enthusiastic. The full rations dealt out during the last three days had increased our physical strength; the prospect of activity was exhilarating, and the Mushir enjoyed such unbounded confidence that the common soldiers did not doubt the wisdom and ultimate success of our foolhardy venture. We officers did not deceive ourselves as to the very remote chance of success of such an audacious rush for liberty; but we were not despondent, and, far from discouraging the troops by giving utterance to our views, we did all in our power to maintain them in their present state of trustful and cheerful courage. I in particular, having examined the Russian lines from the Vid bridge through my glasses, knew the attempt to be hopeless; but I kept my opinion to myself.

I came back from town at ten on the morning of December 9, and after having eaten part of my day's biscuit ration, with a few spoonfuls of hot gruel and a loaf of bread, I packed up my belongings. The sketches, plans, notes, and diaries had increased so much in bulk that I was compelled to leave one-half of my manuscripts behind. My valise was stowed on one of the carts.

At noon the men began to harness the oxen and horses. One officer from each battalion, with a corporal and a squad, was to accompany the train. Our major, having been instructed from headquarters to send an efficient and reliable man, as there was a great pressure of work in town, was good

enough to select me for this service. My orders were to see the train safely installed for the night, and to note carefully the locality of its bivouac, and then to place myself at the disposal of the commander of Plevna town (Hussein Bey), leaving the battalion train in charge of the corporal. My rendezvous with the battalion was at six next morning, on the right Vid bank, close to the foot of the northern auxiliary bridge, the one nearest to Opanetz, which I shall call the Opanetz bridge, and which was 300 yards south of the junction of Vid and Grivitza. The major gave me a copy of the Mushir's *Ordre du Jour*, one of the special order issued for the battalion, and a plan of the neighbourhood. Seymour was to take charge of the company, and I was to resume the command on our meeting next morning.

Before starting I had my men drawn up, and addressed them with more fervour than logic and more confidence than grammar. They cheered me lustily, and cried 'Allah Akbar' (God is great), and 'Yok tesslim' (No surrender). Then I made the round of the redoubt, and bade, silently and sentimentally, farewell to the place which had sheltered me for nearly twenty weeks of dangers, privations, and vicissitudes. Well I remember the last glance I cast at the particular corner in which my couch had lain. Damp, dripping, draughty, bare and comfortless as it was, it had become dear to me.

We started at two o'clock, and being tired from my long tramp in the early morning and my ceaseless labours since, I rode the greater part of the way. The temperature stood at one or two degrees above freezing-point; on the roads and tracks there was deep mud, the hills and fields were white. The sky was overcast, and of that uniform murky grey which speaks of snow. It was clear with us, but there seemed to be a dense fog in the vicinity of Grivitza. I had under me a corporal with twenty men (convalescents), forty packhorses, and twelve ox-carts. Soon other trains, similarly composed, joined us, and by the time we approached the town there was a seemingly interminable procession of vehicles and horses.

We passed through Plevna without stopping. Here I noticed on all sides a boisterous activity; faces were flushed, and voices loud and merry with hope and excitement. As dusk set in we reached our destination, the top of a bare hill 600 yards south-east of the bridge, where there was already a vast encampment of carts and horses, protected by a few companies of infantry, and grouped around the battery which crowned the highest point. Halfway between us and the river, 200 feet below the summit, was the Vid bridge redoubt, strengthened for the sortie, and heavily garrisoned. Several battalions guarded the bridge itself, and beyond it, along the left bank, was a treble line of outposts.

The temperature had fallen; it was now freezing. The faint orange glow of the setting sun was reflected in the quiet waters of the Vid; behind me, in the east, dark clouds were massing. There was a hush in the air, but the stillness was of that unnerving and menacing kind which precedes a storm. The atmosphere was singularly clear in the west, murky elsewhere, oppressively so in the east and north-east. Whilst the tops of Plevna's highest domes and minarets were still illumined by the peaceful dying light of day the flakes began to fall lazily, ushering in the eventful night of December 9-10. The next rising of the sun was to decide the fate of the Plevna army, and with it that of the Ottoman Empire, was to mark an epoch in history, and to shape the course of European politics for decades to come.



PART III
THE FALL OF PLEVNA

7
12

CHAPTER XIII

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE SORTIE

DECEMBER 9 TO 10, 1877

THE fall of Gorna Dubnik and Telish had reduced the strength of the Plevna army to seventy-two battalions, twenty-one squadrons, and eighty-eight guns, not counting the Circassians, whose number had meanwhile decreased to 200. The seventy-two battalions were of greatly unequal strength—varying from 150 men to 500, counting only those who were able to work. For the purposes of the sortie fourteen of the weakest battalions were incorporated with others, so that all the battalions were of nearly equal strength, thus giving a total of fifty-eight battalions, each of 350 to 400 combatants. Hardly any battalion had its complement of eight companies, as many of the latter had been practically annihilated; generally speaking, a battalion mustered from four to six companies.

For the sortie the army was newly organised, being divided into two divisions, each consisting of three brigades of two regiments with four battalions each; and one unattached brigade, consisting of two regiments with five battalions each. The First Division was to do the actual fighting, by forcing its way into, and through, the Russian camp, starting from the bridges, whilst the unattached brigade, acting as convoy to the train, was to cross the Vid with the latter in the meantime by the stone bridge and the southern, wooden bridge. The Second Division (to which my battalion belonged) was to act as rearguard of the general

movement, occupying the fortifications recently erected east of the Vid ; our right flank was to hold the Opanetz redoubts, considerably strengthened, and our left flank the redoubts in the south-west section of the camp. The Second Division was to follow in the track of the First (passing the river by means of all three bridges) as soon as the train had crossed and the First was fairly engaged with the enemy. The First Division was to take up position in battle order on the left bank during the night, and the train was to have crossed before daybreak.*

I have stated in Chapter XII. that at the beginning of November the Plevna army counted 40,000 men. At the final sortie its strength, including 7,000 convalescents and wounded, amounted to 34,000 ; 800 of the worst cases among the wounded and invalids, and 200 convalescents, remained behind in Plevna ; thus it follows that during November and the first nine days of December the army had decreased by 5,000 men. Taking the number of deserters roughly at 1,000 (200 regulars and 800 Circassians), it follows that 4,000 men had died in six weeks, of which, say, 500 were killed in action or by shells, and 3,500—nearly ninety per day—died from illness.

In Chapter XI. I gave a list of the superior officers attached to the Plevna army during the time of its greatest strength (October 8 to 24). Of these the following, being invalided, did not take part in the sortie : General of Division Hassan Sabri Pasha ; Generals of Brigade Emin Pasha, Omer Tafir Pasha ; Colonels Omer Bey, Handi Bey, Osman Bey ; Lieut.-Colonel Mehemed Bey. Lieut.-Colonel Hussein Bey, commander of Plevna town, stayed behind as a protection to the wounded and those few Turkish residents who chose to remain in town.

My battalion formed part of the Eleventh Regiment. It counted 360 file and fourteen officers, divided into four companies, and was led by Major Taki, who had com-

* For *Ordre de Bataille*, see Appendix.

manded it with success and distinction throughout the campaign. The kol aghassi was invalided. Our kiatib had left us early in November to do clerk's duties in Plevna in connection with the stores administration, and I do not know what became of him. Our surgeon was still with us, and was, I believe, the only medical man in the Sixth Brigade. Bakal was bash chawush to the battalion, had the kol aghassi's duties to attend to, and was the major's right hand: up to the last he continued to be beloved and respected by all that knew him, whether superiors or inferiors. My former captain commanded another company of our battalion. My company counted three officers (Lieutenants Seymour, Tereb, and myself) and eighty file, and was divided into two squads, commanded by Seymour and Tereb respectively. My colonel, Kazim Bey, had come with Osman from Widdin as major, had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel after the second battle, and was well known in camp as brave and clever. My brigadier, Edhem Pasha, had joined us just before the third battle, preceded by an excellent reputation; he had conducted himself very well in the September action, although compelled to play an inactive part; had gone to Orkanyé immediately after the battle by stealing at night through the enemy's lines; had commanded a brigade of Ahmed Hifzi's column during its march to Plevna, and behaved with great bravery in the various encounters which this force had to sustain with Krylow's cavalry. He had been wounded at Gorna Dubnik on September 22, when Krylow attacked Ahmed Hifzi's rear—led by him—and had recovered in Plevna.

The Sixth Brigade, to which I belonged, was called the Rear Brigade, and was destined to form the extreme tail of the army, with instructions to be the last to cross the Vid. In the commencement of the action its station was to be at Opanetz.

The Mushir was with the First Division, and intended to command its attack in person, Tahir Pasha being his second-in-command.

I append the

*Ordre du Jour for the Sortie of December 10, 1877.*¹²¹

‘The army is divided into two divisions, each of three brigades, and one convoy brigade.

‘The First Division, commanded by Tahir Pasha, and comprising the brigades of Atouf Pasha, Yunuz Bey, and Tewfik Pasha, will march by columns of battalions. The Second Division, commanded by Adil Pasha, and comprising the brigades of Hussein Vasi Pasha, Sadik Pasha, and Edhem Pasha, will protect the flanks and the rear of the army. The Seventh Brigade, commanded by Said Bey, is to form the convoy to the train.

‘Adil Pasha will be in advance of his division, at the bridge-head, in order to direct the movements of his troops and to indicate to them the positions they will have to occupy.

‘On the day to be fixed, weather permitting, at seven in the evening, one of the battalions of Ibrahim Tabiya and the troops of Chorum Tabiya will retreat to Ikhtihat Tabiya, where they will be joined by those of Araba Tabiya, under Rassim Bey. At 7.15 they will start thence to headquarters, where they will form themselves into the Third Brigade, under Tewfik Pasha. Thence they will march along the rear of the redoubts of Adil Pasha’s division, skirting the northern margin of the town, without entering it, and following the high-road to the bridge.

‘The other two battalions of Ibrahim Tabiya, forming part of the First Brigade, will also leave at seven, and will be joined in Atouf Tabiya by the troops of this work and by those of Omer Tabiya; thence they will march, by way of the town, to the artillery-park on the hills between town and bridge, where they will await the other battalions of the brigade.

‘The battalions stationed between Omer Tabiya and the Tultchenitza will commence to leave at 7.30; they will arrive at the artillery-park as early as possible, and will thus

complete the First Brigade, under Atouf Pasha. This brigade will then march to the bridge, where it will find the Third Brigade already posted. The two battalions which are stationed in the western part of the town, and which belong to the Third Brigade, will march with the First Brigade to the bridge, and will await here the other battalions of their brigade.

‘The battalions of the Second Brigade, under Yunuz Bey, stationed between the Tultchenitza and Pertev Tabiya, will execute their movements in the following manner: Two battalions from Milas and Talahat Tabiyas, temporarily under Ali Mehemed Bey, will start at 6.30, and will be joined in Baghlarbashi Tabiya by the battalion of the latter. The three battalions of Ghazi Osman Tabiya and the neighbouring batteries will also start at 6.30; they will march by way of Yunuz Tabiya to Baghlarbashi Tabiya, where they will join the three battalions which Ali Mehemed Bey has temporarily under his command. The six battalions will start from Baghlarbashi at nine for the Vid, and *en route* they will be joined by Yunuz Bey, with the two battalions from Yunuz and Kütchük Tabiyas; the brigade will proceed noiselessly to the bridge, passing at the back of the Blasivatz redoubts.

‘When the three brigades of the First Division have arrived at the bridge-head, the First will cross the river by way of the southern, wooden bridge, the Second and Third by way of the stone bridge. This done, the division will form in battle order on the left Vid bank, in columns of battalions, left flank *en potence*, right flank thrown forward.

‘As soon as the battalions of the Second Brigade have evacuated their position, Pertev Bey, who is to command the Thirteenth Regiment (of the Convoy Brigade), will detach three battalions, and march to the bridge-head, where he will be joined by the other battalions of this brigade. As soon as the (Seventh) brigade under Said Bey is complete, the train will commence to cross by means of the stone bridge and the southern, wooden bridge; when the train has passed the brigade will cross by the same bridges, each regi-

ment on one bridge. When the train has begun to move the brigade will march, at 150 yards' distance, on its left flank, in single file of columns of battalion, and in such a manner as to deploy readily for battle should the enemy attack the Convoy.

'The battalions of Baghché Tabiya and the neighbouring works will have joined this brigade (the Seventh) at the bridge-head.

'Two of the battalions of the Fourth Brigade (under Hussein Vasfi Pasha), with Hourshid Bey, will assemble at dusk in the larger Blasivatz redoubt, as well as in its trenches. The six other battalions of this brigade will assemble in the entrenchments recently erected between this work and the bridge road. When the whole of the train and convoy is on the left bank of the Vid the brigade will abandon its position and retreat in good order, in sections of companies, to the bridge.

'Of the twelve guns of this brigade, six will be placed in battery on the hill and six in the Vid bridge redoubt, so as to protect, at the same time, the advance of the First Division and the line of retreat of their brigade. Afterwards the twelve guns will cross by the stone bridge, whilst the infantry of the brigade will cross by the southern, wooden bridge.

'Of the Fifth Brigade, under Sadik Pasha, two battalions will occupy, in good time during the evening, the new entrenchments erected in the Vid plain on both sides of the high-road, whilst the other six battalions of the brigade and four battalions (the Eleventh Regiment) of the Sixth Brigade (under Edhem Pasha), which will have left Bash Tabiya and the Janik Bair redoubts at seven, will descend the Janik Bair, in sections of double companies, towards the western foot of the Bair, where the Bukova brook flows into the river Grivitza. The six battalions of the Fifth Brigade will pass behind the mill in the Vid plain: three of them will take up position in the entrenchments recently erected between the Blasivatz redoubts and the bridge, the guns behind the earth-walls built for this purpose; the three other battalions, with three guns, will remain in proximity to the bridge during the

passage of the First Division and the Convoy, namely, two battalions on the left bank, in suitable positions, and one, with the guns, on the right bank, close to the bridge-head; they are to cover the advance of the Fourth Brigade and that of their own brigade.

‘When the Fourth Brigade has arrived at its points of crossing, the battalions of the Fifth Brigade which have been left behind will form quickly in columns of companies, and proceed in sections to join their division by the shortest route.

‘Of the four battalions of the Sixth Brigade which are to march with the Fifth Brigade, two, with two battalions of the latter, will occupy during the evening the Bukova entrenchments; the two others, with the six guns, will cross the river by the Opanetz bridge, and will take up position on the left bank, to protect the march of the other four battalions of the Sixth Brigade (Twelfth Regiment), which will have occupied the Opanetz entrenchments; when these have also crossed by the Opanetz bridge, the eight battalions will form themselves into the Sixth Brigade, and will march in single file of columns of battalions, with sufficient distance between the battalions, so as to protect, in case of need, the right flank of the train.

‘For the organisation, the start, and the march of the train the following instructions are given:—

‘Forty cases of cartridges, carried by twenty packhorses, will accompany each battalion. The artillery ammunition will be distributed on the battery carts, and, where there is a deficiency of these, on packhorses. The remainder of the cartridges, viz. 140 cases per battalion, as well as the tents, forage, tools, officers’ luggage, water, baggage, and other effects, will be carried, partly on the ox-carts, and partly—where carts are deficient—on packhorses, and will be sent, one day in advance, to the neighbourhood of the bridge-head, sheltered against the hostile fire.

‘As soon as the First Division has crossed the river the train will commence to move. The vehicles and the horses must be assembled in advance, close to the bridges; they

must be stationed so that they can cross successively and in this order: firstly, the packhorses carrying the ammunition of the First Division; secondly, the vehicles carrying the tents, baggage, and other effects of the First Division; thirdly, the vehicles carrying the tents, baggage, effects, and spare ammunition of artillery and cavalry; fourthly, the carts of the Mahomedan residents of Plevna, with their wives, families, and belongings; fifthly, the vehicles with the tents, baggage, and other effects of the Second Division; sixthly, the packhorses carrying the ammunition of the Second Division; seventhly, the carts with the wounded; lastly, the vehicles and packhorses of the Convoy Brigade.¹²²

‘The train will hasten the crossing of the river by the stone bridge and the southern, wooden bridge so as to be on the left bank before daybreak; it will then proceed in the track of the First Division, at a distance of 1,200 yards.

‘During the march the train will be divided into eight sections (viz. the eight sections mentioned above). One of the battalions of the Seventh Brigade (one that has its complement of eight companies) will be attached as escort to the train, a company to each section. The men of these companies will see that the march of the train is executed steadily and without delays. Any cart or horse which shows signs of breaking down is to leave the ranks immediately, and its cargo is to be distributed, without stopping the march, among those carts which are in good condition. The officers of this battalion will take care to have these instructions strictly attended to, and will be personally responsible. Only thus can delays be avoided which may prove fatal. The train will not follow the high-road (which must be reserved for any battalions of the Second Division which may be called upon to reinforce the First), but will march through the fields on either side of the road, in a line ten to fifteen carts wide. Care must be taken that the carts follow one another in regular and straight files.

‘The twenty packhorses which are to accompany each battalion, and the artillery-ammunition carts, will be so dis-

tributed that their positions may correspond to the place which their battalions and batteries occupy in the column, and will march massed in brigades, on the left flank of their respective brigades. There will thus be 160 horses and four carts to each brigade.

‘Three squadrons of the Saloniki Regiment from the Corps Cavalry will act as skirmishers, marching at 100 to 300 yards’ distance, according to the nature of the country, on both sides of the convoy and the train. The cavalry attached to the Seventh Brigade (the two squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks) are to remain with the infantry of this brigade, and are to assist in maintaining order among the train; the squadron of Vodena volunteers is to march in rear of the train.

‘Should the enemy attack the train, the Seventh Brigade is to immediately launch its cavalry and a sufficient number of battalions to the threatened spot, in order to repel, or at least hold in check, the assailants; in any such cases the train is not to stop its march, but is to proceed at an increased pace, and is to try to make headway.

‘As the train consists of no less than 1,000 vehicles and 3,500 packhorses, it is important to prevent all disorder when crossing the river; for this purpose two capable and energetic majors will be chosen from the Seventh Brigade—one for each bridge—to see that the passage is effected in order and steadiness, and without ill-timed haste.

‘From the moment of departure and throughout the march the men will remain in the ranks, and will not leave them under any pretext whatever. All officers, without distinction of rank, will watch over the strict execution of this order; those whose men have caused any disorder or delay will be held personally responsible, and will be severely punished.

‘Five squadrons of the Nizamié cavalry are attached to the First Division, four squadrons of the same to the Second Division, and will march with their respective divisions.

‘The Fourth and Fifth Brigades will march 500 yards in rear of the convoy. Their mission is to repel any attack from this side, and to cover the retreat.

‘GHAZI OSMAN.

‘Plevna, December 7, 1877.’

The last document which I shall submit to the reader is the special order issued for my battalion :—

‘The battalion, forming part of the Eleventh Regiment of Edhem Pasha’s brigade, will begin to pack and harness its twelve carts and sixty packhorses at noon on the day previous to that appointed for the sortie. An hour or two afterwards the carts, with their twenty-seven oxen and forty of the packhorses, escorted by a scratch squad composed of twenty convalescents, or weak men, under a corporal and a lieutenant, will leave the western Janik Bair redoubt *en route* for Plevna, and having passed through the town without halting, will bivouac for the night on the hill close to the stone bridge. From this point the train will be under the command of the general of the Seventh Brigade (Said Bey). The corporal and his squad will remain with the train and obey the orders issued by the officers of the Seventh Brigade. The lieutenant will join the battalion before daybreak.

‘The battalion, composed of four companies, and accompanied by twenty packhorses carrying each two boxes of cartridges, will quietly leave its redoubt, together with two other battalions of the same regiment and one of the batteries of the brigade, at seven in the evening. The three battalions will march to the Yeni Tabiya, where they will be joined by another battalion. The regiment of four battalions being now complete, it will march, accompanied by the battery, *via* the Bukova redoubts (where the Yeni Tabiya battalion and another will remain for the night), to the Opanetz redoubts, thence to the head of the Opanetz bridge, where the two battalions and the battery will rest for a few hours. During the night (at least an hour before day-break) they will cross the Opanetz bridge and take up a

defensive position, facing north and north-west, on the left bank, which they will hold during the execution of the sortie by the First Division and until all the eight battalions and the two batteries of the Sixth Brigade are on the left bank. After that the whole brigade, with its twelve guns, is to march, in conformity with the order issued for the Sixth Brigade by Adil Pasha, the commander of the Second Division, on the right flank of the train, in proper order of regiments and battalions, the batteries between the two regiments, in single file of battalions, with intervals between the battalions, so as to protect the whole right flank of the train, and keeping pace with it. The twenty packhorses of the battalion are to be massed with those of the other seven battalions of the brigade and the ammunition carts of its two batteries, and are to march on the left flank of the brigade, halfway between it and the train columns. Any attempt on the enemy's part to attack the right flank of the train must be immediately and vigorously checked.

‘KAZIM BEY.’

It will be seen later that the second half of these instructions was not carried out, inasmuch as the Twelfth Regiment never crossed the Opanetz bridge, but remained on the right bank throughout the action ; nor was the participation in the charge of the First Division on the part of my battalion and another from my regiment in the programme ; it was undertaken by Kazim Bey—so I presume—on the impulse of the moment.

In order to compare our strength with that of the enemy I append a summary of the Russian forces operating in West Bulgaria on December 10 :—

West Army.

Commander-in-Chief : Grand Duke Nicholas.

Chief-of-Staff : General Nepokoitchizki.

Army of Investment.

Commander : Prince Charles of Roumania.
 Second : General Todleben.
 Chief-of-Staff : General Prince Imeretinski.
 Commander of Artillery : General Moller.
 Commander of Cavalry : General Arnoldi.
 Chief Engineer : General Reitlinger.
 Chief Sanitary Inspector : Doctor Köcher.

First Section : Bivolar to Kanli Tabiya (exclusive).

	Batts.	Squads.	Guns.
Commander : General Tchernat.			
Three Roumanian divisions	28	28	78

Second Section : Kanli Tabiya to Radishevo.

Commander : General Krüdener.			
Ninth Corps	18	4	80

Third Section : Radishevo to Tultchenitza Valley.

Commander : General Sotow.			
Fourth Corps	13	4	48

Fourth Section : Tultchenitza Valley to Kartushaven

Commander : General Skobelev.			
Corps	27	6	96

Fifth Section : Kartushaven to Ternina.

Commander : General Katalci.			
Guards' Corps	16	2	54

Sixth Section : Left Vid bank from opposite Ternina to opposite Bivolar.

Commander : General Ganetzki.			
Corps of Grenadiers	30	22	126
	<hr/> 132	<hr/> 66	<hr/> 482

Detachments outside Army of Investment :—

At Lovdcha and Selvi	34	4	136
Commander : General Karzow.			

	Batts.	Squads.	Guns.
Balkan Corps	30	48	46
Commander: General Gourko.			
In Lom Palankah	8	36	30
Totals	204	154	694
Total, about 180,000 men.			

I return now to the record of my personal adventures.

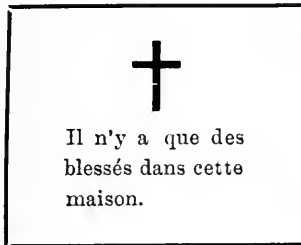
When the battalion's train, of which I had charge, had arrived on the hill, I sought out a place for its bivouac which would at once be easy to find again, and which would not be difficult of access. I found a spot that answered to my expectations on the northern slope of the hill, not far from the wooden bridge. Here I installed the carts and the pack-horses, caused the beasts to be unharnessed, and distributed the small quantity of forage which I had received in my redoubt for that purpose. This was insufficient to provide for their wants; but, strolling in the neighbourhood, I encountered an urchin who carried two bundles of capital hay. I am sorry to say I deprived him forcibly of his burden; but my horses and oxen were much nearer and dearer to me than the goats or donkeys of some treacherous Bulgarian. I decamped with my booty hastily, leaving the little fellow sprawling on the ground, and in the darkness I heard his 'boo-hoo' attract the attention of a patrol. Needless to say the perpetrator of this shocking outrage was never discovered. Arrived at the bivouac, I had a fire made up, and having seen my men and beasts installed for the night, I walked to the town. A scanty snowfall was coming down lazily. The blackness of the night was lighted up by sparse bivouac-fires. Gaunt, lean figures of men and beasts illumined by the flickering flames threw monstrous shadows. The men, although excited and eager for the fray, were quiet and subdued in voice and manner, for silence had been enjoined. This vast bivouac of carts and beasts, extending over an area of two or three square miles in a desolate winter land-

scape, associated with the idea of the dread morrow that would decide betwixt life and death, victory and defeat, liberty and captivity, impressed me gloomily and unpleasantly, and although I had no presentiments, I experienced a curious sensation, much like that which we feel at the approach of a thunderstorm which turns the stomach and disturbs the digestion. The fringe of the bivouac was composed of the vehicles of the Turkish residents. A heterogeneous crew they were, from the fat, rich trader, with his well-stocked harem, down to the lean, hollow-cheeked labourer with wife, child, and donkey; the men gloomy and preoccupied, the veiled women sobbing, the youngsters playing at hide-and-seek among the carts and the camp-fires. I felt deeply for these starving and shivering wretches, who had to leave their homes, their trades, their belongings, their all. I looked in vain for my little girl-friend, and concluded that her father's cart had not arrived yet. While I was in and near the train encampment battalions and batteries arrived from all sides, in silence and in proper order, on their way to their appointed stations. In the places where the roads led through valleys, and which were hidden from the lynx eyes watching in the enemy's look-outs, fires had been lighted; wherever the paths or tracks lay within the hostile range of vision many nasty accidents occurred, as the feeble light of the lanterns failed to penetrate the dense moist atmosphere. It was a grand sight, all these thousands, eager for the last struggle, ready for a supreme sacrifice; they came out of the depth of the night into the brightness of the camp-fires in a seemingly endless procession, and vanished into the blackness beyond.

Arrived at the town I walked to the konak, suppressing my desire to pay a flying visit to the girl. An officer asked me to write out labels to be posted at the ambulance-doors in a certain street. By the light of a candle-stump I made a number of placards running thus (*see next page*):—

Armed with a brush and paste-pot I turned bill-sticker, and affixed my handiwork to the doors of all the houses in

the street appointed to me, twenty or more, which were exhibiting the ambulance-flag.



Anything more dismal than that deserted, nocturnal town, abandoned by all but dying and helpless men, and perhaps 400 starving Bulgarian families, in lieu of the four thousand happy households it had once contained, cannot be imagined. Desolate, dead, God-forsaken Plevna during the night of December 9-10 was no more like the thriving and pretty Plevna of July than the decaying corpse of an old hag is like the living body of a blooming girl in the full vigour of youth. The unlighted, empty streets, with here and there a slouching outcast, like a starving beast of prey on a hopeless search for a scent, or the swift, shadow-like passage of a woman huddled up under a coarse shawl; the mirror-like ground and the white roofs; the icicled trees, looking like the ghosts of vegetation; the dark and silent houses, many of them partly demolished, some wholly so; the ink-black sky above, and the night surrounding me on all sides like solid walls, unilluminated by a single speck or gleam of light, save where the rays of my lantern thrust their narrow circle of feeble, flickering, pale yellow radiance; the metallic ring of my solitary steps on the frozen soil in this silence of death; with, to add an element of terror, occasional groans and curses proceeding from the interior of the ambulances, haunted me long afterwards as quite unearthly in their collective impression. Twice I stumbled over corpses which had been thrust into the gutter as the quickest way of getting rid of them. As I served in loneliness my dreary apprenticeship at bill-sticking, I had to

shake myself and pinch my flesh, so much like the phantasy of an ugly dream was the scene to my mind. The very glue of the paste-pot smelt nauseously of corruption, and as I plied my brush on the door-panels I felt like one alone alive in a gigantic graveyard, writing lying epitaphs on an endless succession of headstones.

So pregnant was time with events big and small, but horrible withal, that my short service as bill-sticker to the Sultan's Plevna army brought me two adventures, both sufficiently unpleasant to impart to a man's existence, under ordinary circumstances, an element of the terrible and sensational that will last for weeks, but of which I took hardly any notice. Being bidden to enter, by loud voices within, one of the ambulances, I found, by the feeble light of a reeking oil-lamp, some invalids fighting for the possession of a remnant of half-rotten food discovered in a forgotten cupboard. Men without legs or feet, men with amputated arms or hands, men devoured by dreadful diseases, were clutching, scratching, kicking, dealing and receiving blows for something that your dog or cat, sir or madam, would consider himself insulted at being offered. I pacified them, and distributed the nauseous remnant in equal parts. They were like ghouls, and the scene might have figured in the 'Inferno.' As I turned to go a man without legs caught hold of me from his mattress, and begged me to carry him to the train-bivouac, so that he might accompany the army. Others knelt down, crying in their misery, imploring me to liberate them out of this hell. Happily, an attendant—himself a convalescent and hardly able to crawl—turned up, and I wrenched myself away. When I had finished my work I returned by a narrow lane where the darkness was absolute. Someone sprang upon me and tore the paste-pot away from me. I presume he had perceived it by the light of my lantern—which I dropped in the struggle—and thought the vessel contained food. I belaboured his face with the brush. He spluttered and croaked, swore and choked, and finally I rammed the bristles down his throat. Presently he was

joined by others, and I heard snatches of Bulgarian. Discretion being the better part of valour, I left my unknown and invisible assailants in possession of the paste-pot, and, wishing them a good appetite, I beat a hasty retreat towards the konak.

Here I assisted some officers and convalescents in packing up the archives and records. I have no exact notion of the time; I presume it was between ten and eleven. In conversation with my comrades I learnt that in the afternoon, whilst I was on my way to town with the battalion's train, smoke in the direction of Gorna Dubnik had spread the report of the approach of the Army of Relief, which had eventually, like all previous alarms, turned out to be a delusion, possibly a ruse on the part of the Russians. There had been a difference of opinion between the Mushir, who was in Araba Tabiya, and Tahir Pasha, who was in Pertev Tabiya, the former insisting upon the execution of the sortie, rumours notwithstanding, the latter desiring another delay of twenty-four hours, in order to wait for the supposed assistance. The discussion, conducted by telegraph, had ended in Osman, with characteristic high-handedness and impetuosity, cutting the wire.

Whilst we were engaged in storing the boxes and bundles on a cart, the Mushir and his staff rode up, preceded by a mounted torch-bearer, and escorted by a small detachment of Saloniki cavalry. Osman entered the konak, where he remained closeted with Hussein Bey, the governor of Plevna, for a quarter of an hour. When he came out the light from the torch fell full upon his countenance. I had not seen him face to face since the September battle. His features were drawn and careworn, the cheeks hollow; there were deep lines on the forehead and blue rings under the eyes. The expression in the latter was one of angry determination. He responded to my salute with that peculiar nod of his which was more a frown than a greeting. Having apparently forgotten something, he went back with Hussein to the house and sat down at the table in the general room, conversing

with him in whispers. I took a chair at the other end, among some officers who were writing, and pretending to post up my note-book, drew hastily the sketch which is reproduced in this volume. When Osman rose, scowling a general farewell, we all went after him into the street, to witness his departure. A company of the battalion of volunteers of the Ottoman Union had drawn up along the road, and a feeble band made a melancholy attempt at martial music. The Mushir mounted his fine Arab horse, bade farewell to Hussein, gave a last glance, that looked much like a good-bye for ever, to the konak, and rode away, followed by his Staff, the cavalry, and the volunteers with the cart.

Osman and his officers spent the night in one of the farm-houses on the western outskirts of Plevna.

There remained now in town of active soldiers the Governor, with one or two subordinates; the surgeon who had been selected to stay behind (I think it was one of the Germans), with two assistants; 200 convalescents, to attend to and protect the invalids, and twenty officers who, like myself, had had some final arrangements to see to. The rendezvous for the latter, previous to rejoining their troops, was at the konak. Here they arrived before midnight, when we had a supper of gruel and bread, and having bidden farewell to those who had to remain behind, and who saw us depart with heavy hearts, we walked in a body to the train-bivouac. As we passed the last houses I said good-bye to Plevna.

The night was intensely dark. In lieu of the sky there seemed to be a solid low roof as black as pitch, whence descended a sparse shower of small snowflakes. The temperature was a few degrees below freezing-point. Some of us had lanterns, without the aid of which we should not have found our way. A thick fog hung over the valleys. The atmosphere was peculiarly oppressive to the senses, despite the cold, so much so that it appeared to weigh bodily upon us. Such little conversation as passed between us was not of a cheerful kind; moreover, we were all strangers to each other

and had no subjects in common, except the one paramount interest attached to the morrow. Regarding this our discussion was the briefest on record, and can be summarised in these words: 'It is all over with us.' We were unanimous as to the chance of success, and most of us did not expect to witness the next nightfall. When one is once thoroughly convinced that all is lost, arguments are thrown away; so we accomplished our tramp in gloomy silence, communing with our black thoughts.

The hush of death lay over the encampment of the train. Most of the fires were out. We parted company, as the twenty of us belonged to as many battalions. I and two other lieutenants from my brigade walked to a deserted hut on the river's brink, halfway between the stone bridge and the southern, wooden bridge, which I had noticed in the evening. It may originally have been a boathouse or a fisherman's shed. We reached it between one and two in the morning. It was stripped completely bare, every board, fixed or movable, having been used as firewood. However, we had a roof over our heads. Several officers from the Convoy Brigade had already installed themselves.

I wrapped my great-coat around me and lay down on the bare soil to snatch a few hours of rest, trusting to chance to wake up in time to join my battalion before daybreak. The door on the river-front opened on a dilapidated landing-stage, of which the rotten boards were trodden by a lonely sentry with clockwork monotony. I heard the waters splashing and murmuring, and every now and then a lump of ice floating on the surface dashed itself against the piles.

At this point the Vid has a width of 100 yards.

It was so foggy in the vicinity of the river that I had seen nothing of the First Division on my way to the hut; but as I lay there, too depressed to sleep, though tired to death, I heard on both sides the tramp of battalions, which continued up to five in the morning. The First Division was crossing, two brigades by the stone bridge, one by the wooden bridge. I had brief snatches of uneasy rest, and whenever the intense

cold, or dreams born of mental misery, awoke me, the distant sound, uncanny in its monotony, roused me to consciousness. Sometimes there was the clatter of a prancing horse's hoofs on the hard ground, sometimes a subdued command ; and on went the tramp of thousands, cheerfully marching to their doom in obedience to the indomitable will of one man.

There was no shelling during the night.

At a little after five I awoke with a start from a hallucination of particular hideousness : I had dreamt that some awful ogre or ghou, somebody or something unknown, but unspeakably terrible, cruel, and horror-inspiring, was trying to get in by the door. It was the step of the sentry, which had so unnerved me that I was shaking and bathed in cold perspiration. As my senses returned to me I listened in vain for the tramp of the battalions across the bridges ; there was silence now. Immediately afterwards a fresh sound struck my ears, that of wheels. 'The train has commenced to move,' said one of my companions, who had, like me, been listening. I lighted a match, and found that the officers from the Convoy Brigade had left us. We rose, and in the dark nibbled hurriedly some biscuits. Then we stepped out. It was intensely cold, and the night was pitch-dark. One of my comrades had a lantern, but its gleam shone feeble and ghostlike through the thick fog that hung over the river. Presently steps approached us : a small detachment which, by the light of a torch, collected the sentries posted along the river. From the corporal in command I learnt that the passage of the First Division had been effected in perfect order, without incidents or mishaps, and that the train was now well under way.

We walked along the bank northward, running at every step the risk of falling into the water. The ground was as slippery as a mirror, and the darkness absolute. Passing the foot of the southern, wooden bridge, we came within the light-circle of a huge fire, by the gleam from which a seemingly interminable procession of creaking vehicles and heavily laden horses was crossing. We wended our way with difficulty

through the maze of carts, struck inland by a footpath, cutting off the river bend, and arrived at the Opanetz bridge without mishap, save that of continually losing the track in the darkness. Here an invisible sentry challenged us. We ascertained the positions of our battalions; I had the good fortune to be within a few yards of mine. Having bidden farewell to my companions, I reported myself to my major and resumed command of my company, exchanging a few hurried words with Seymour and Tereb. I learnt that the battalion had reached its destination at midnight without any incident worth mentioning, and had bivouacked on the spot where I had found it.

It was now about 6.30. A quarter of an hour later our colonel, Kazim Bey, rode up and spoke to the major. The command, 'Form in columns of companies,' was given; this was succeeded by the order to advance. Guided by men with lanterns (for it was still quite dark), we crossed in silence the shaky pontoon bridge, which quivered and creaked under our tread. A battery and another battalion from our regiment followed us.

Arrived on the left bank, we waited for dawn close to the bridge-head. When behind us, in the east, the first glimmer of the eventful Monday, December 10, imparted a greyish tinge to the hitherto deep black mist, so that the nearest objects rose gradually into existence like spectres created out of nothing, we took our stations, one battalion facing north, its right flank resting on the river, the other (mine) facing west, its left flank joining hands with the extreme right of the First Division (which had meanwhile taken up its pre-arranged position for attack), the six guns in the right angle formed by the two battalions. Before the attack commenced the men of our linked battalion turned left about, so as to face west as well as ourselves, without, however, otherwise altering their positions. In this order we followed, and participated in, the assault of the First Division.

My company formed the left flank of my battalion, and I was thus in touch with the First Division. I had my two

squads in parallel lines: one (Seymour's), as skirmishers, in front, the other (Tereb's), as fighting line, thirty yards behind. As it grew clearer and lighter I could see on my left the line of attack, two miles long, of the First Division. Its extreme right was not more than fifty yards away from me.

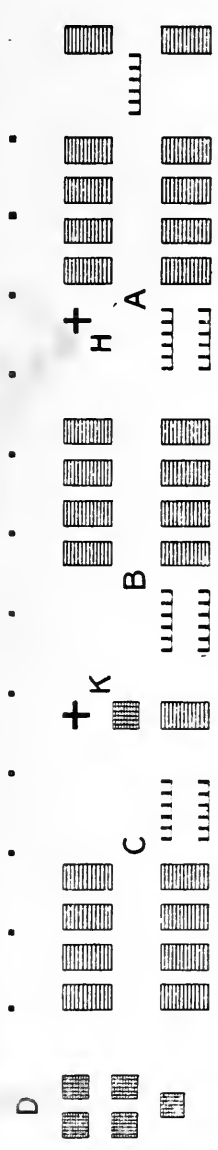
The snowfall had ceased, and the mist cleared as the morning advanced; but the sun, veiled all day long, never shone upon the sortie. The temperature rose to one or two degrees above freezing-point, and on the tracks and roads the snow was soon transformed into slush under the tread of the charging battalions.

An imposing sight was that long, straight line of the First Division as it gradually emerged out of the morning mist, extending as far as eyes could travel: twelve battalions in first line, with twelve companies of skirmishers slightly in advance; twelve battalions in second line, 100 yards in rear, with six batteries distributed among the latter; every man at his post, waiting but for the command to advance, every company in faultless order, the whole body ready in grand and solid battle array. Never has Turkey made a finer show of soldiers than with the twenty-four crack battalions of her First Division in the last sortie from Plevna. The dark hoods of the great-coats, drawn over the fezes and pointing upwards, imparted an element of grotesqueness to the appearance of the men, in fantastic contrast to the glittering files of sword-bayonets, of which the steel blades reflected the sombre grey hue of the snow-pregnant sky.

It was a glorious idea that all these thousands were animated by one thought, inspired by one wish: to do or die. Our last resource, our last appeal to arms, our last stake in the game, our last and supreme effort—and after that, come what may, we had done our duty. Hope, that Divine spark in the human breast, intoxicated us to such an extent that even we officers, although better informed than the men as to the true state of things, forgot doubts and misgivings at the sight of that grand array, and revelled beforehand in the sensation of success.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE CHARGING FORCE IN THE BATTLE OF DECEMBER 10, 1877.

SKIRMISHERS



A	1 ST BRIGADE	} 1 ST DIVISION	8 BATTALIONS	12 GUNS
B	2 ND BRIGADE		8 BATTALIONS	12 GUNS
C	3 RD BRIGADE		8 BATTALIONS	12 GUNS
D	NIZAMIÉ		5 SQUADRONS	
E	FROM 2 ND DIVISION		2 BATTALIONS	6 GUNS
F	SALONIKI AUXILIARIES			
G	FROM CONVOY BRIGADE		2 BATTALIONS	6 GUNS
H	TAHIR PASHA & STAFF			
K	OSMAN PASHA, STAFF, & ESCORT		1 BATTALION	1 SQUADRON
TOTAL STRENGTH OF COLUMN			29 BATTALIONS	48 GUNS

In front the Russian entrenchments rose out of the vapours sinister and threatening, the barriers betwixt us and liberty; beyond them the misty distance meant freedom, the end and goal of the stupendous struggle that was to ensue.

The country and military honour called for a supreme sacrifice, and willingly we offered it, knowing full well the alternative: one of the most glorious victories recorded in the annals of history, or annihilation. In the nature of things there could be no middle course, for we had burned our boats—that is, we had evacuated Plevna and abandoned our camp and our redoubts.



CHAPTER XIV

THE FOURTH BATTLE OF PLEVNA

DECEMBER 10, 1877

As the lustreless grey morning light spread over the bleak winter landscape I took stock of the details of the scenery. In front of me was an even, bare, shelterless, gently rising plain, with two villages : Dolna Netropolié, two miles and a half to the right (north-west), midway up the slope ; Gorna Netropolié, four miles ahead (west), on the summit. The nearest point of the Russian lines was 3,000 yards ahead. The front line consisted of low earthworks ; 500 yards in rear, on a higher level, were strong redoubts. On my right was the Bivolar reach of the river ; on my left, the Vid plain, following the direction of the river-valley (south-west), extending to the confines of the horizon, and traversed by the bold line of the Orkanyé high-road. Behind me, beyond the Opanetz pontoon bridge, was the triangular-shaped little valley through which flows the Grivitza ; the junction of this river with the Vid was barely 300 yards east from my standpoint. On both sides of the Grivitza Valley the hills were steep and high, concealing the town of Plevna and our former camp from my view. Looking up-river I could see the southern, wooden bridge, and the old stone bridge, over which the carts and packhorses were incessantly passing.

This was my first and only action fought on a plain, my previous engagements having been in the narrow confines of hill and dale.

According to the Mushir's disposition the train should have finished crossing by daybreak ; but delays are inevitable

on such occasions, and it was nine o'clock before the last cart had passed. At this hour the whole of the First Division, Convoy Brigade, and train, were on the left bank, whilst the Second Division, with the exception of our two battalions, was on the right bank. The five batteries of the latter (excluding the six guns attached to my battalion) were posted on the slopes of the right bank, and commenced just after nine to shell the enemy's entrenchments ahead. The Russians responded, both in front and from the batteries near Dolna Dubnik.

At 9.30 our bugles sounded 'Advance,' and the whole line, two miles long, began to move, in one grand column. Our colonel placed himself at the head of my battalion. We kept pace with the front line of the First Division. I was with the first squad, Seymour by my side; Tereb and his men were thirty yards in rear.

There never was anything half so grand as that impetuous rush for the hostile entrenchments. The men fired without stopping; we went at the quick, hurling a hail of lead before us. The troops repeated incessantly the sonorous Arabic phrase: 'Bismillah rahmin,' *i.e.* 'In the name of the merciful God' (the opening words of the Koran); from battalion to battalion the cry spread, the syllables kept pace with the step of the charging brigades, and in the end 10,000 throats sent the invocation up to the pitiless Heavens in a grand and solemn monotone. In an incredibly short time we had traversed three-fourths of the intervening space. The Russian infantry-fire tore deep gaps in our line; so murderous was it that the whole of the First Division, and we with it, came at length to a dead-stop. The men in the front line went down on their stomachs. Some rearrangement was made in the First Division, but the powder-smoke was so thick that I could not clearly see what it was. The major rode up, and by his order I caused Tereb's squad to advance, so as to be forty feet in rear of the first squad. By this arrangement, and on such level ground, the company was kept well in hand.

Meanwhile the cannonade had become deafening. The

six batteries of the First Division deployed in grand order, and soon every one of our eighty-eight guns hurled their projectiles against the Russian redoubts in front. There were several explosions among the train, and, with a beating heart, I noticed disorder in the long files of vehicles.

After an interval of ten minutes the bugles of the First Division sounded 'Storm.' The men jumped to their feet, and uttering our battle-cry we made straight for the nearest trench. A murderous discharge of rifle-fire greeted us. Half of the men of my first squad were down. Suddenly I became aware of a vacancy at my side. I turned back, and beheld Jack writhing on the ground, with hands on his breast, a dark stream staining his convulsively twisting fingers. Seeing me stop and turn he held out a hand to me, with a look in his eyes the like of which I hope to God I shall never behold again. In the meantime (all this took place in fewer moments than it will take the reader to peruse it) the first squad had advanced without me; the second came up and pushed me along. Tereb shouted into my ear: 'God have mercy on him!' and clutched my arm. Once more I looked back, but the smoke hid my dying friend. 'It is all over with him,' said I to myself; 'a man with such a wound cannot live many minutes,' and I ran to catch up the front squad, my brain disturbed by a whirlwind of agonising thoughts. In an incredibly short time we had the first trench in our possession, then a second and a third, and before we knew what we were about we were amidst the Russian guns, hacking, clubbing, stabbing, using bayonets and butt-ends, swords and revolvers, whilst overhead flew in both directions countless shells, like an infernal gale of gigantic hailstones, each with a hissing white trail. The confusion was terrible; in the smoke one knew no longer who was friend and who foe. The din was deafening, and my voice, as I tried to cheer the men, was soundless to my own hearing. Such a crazy witches' Sabbath, such a boiling and seething mass of mad humanity, cannot be imagined, much less described.

My men, mixed with another company of my battalion, and with the squads on the extreme right of the First Division, were in the midst of a Russian battery of eight pieces. The enemy's gunners got their prancing, terror-stricken horses out, and succeeded in removing five of the guns; two others the Grenadiers dragged away by hand; one piece remained in our possession. We pursued, and found ourselves in a labyrinth of mud huts, every one of which was fought for and won. Finally we were clear of the Russians, having taken, along our whole front, the first line of their entrenchments. Five hundred yards ahead was a second, stronger line.

I collected my men, and found sixty of them. Not noticing Tereb, I inquired for him, and the corporal of his squad pointed silently to a lifeless mass in a pool of blood a few yards away. It was he, lying on his face, with a revolver-bullet in his head and a gash in the shoulder. Two friends, companions in weal and woe for over eight months, gone in less than eight minutes; but at that moment I hardly realised the horror of the situation. It came home to me later in the day, and then I envied them. They died the most beautiful death that man can die, and fell, both, face to the foe.

I think that thirty minutes must have elapsed before the Russians commenced their counter-attack. In this interval of comparative quiet our two battalions manned the Russian entrenchments, and did what was necessary in order to place them in a state of defence by closing the open entrances at the back with carts, lumber, and dead bodies. Our right flank was not left unprotected, as our linked battalion placed itself *en potence*, facing north, just in time: for we noticed movements of troops in that quarter. The guns were installed behind the earthworks, and commenced to shell the hostile redoubts ahead. The Russian gun left in our hands had been rendered useless by a shell-splinter; we pushed it over an embankment, demolishing it completely.

We longed now for the advent of the Second Division (of which, up to the moment of the assault, only my battalion and that on our right had passed the river), which, according to the Mushir's plan, should have crossed by now. Vainly we strained our eyes; but we saw signs of fighting on the right bank, proving that our rear was pressed. In fact, by this time Plevna and the greater part of our former camp were in the enemy's hands.

From where I stood I could not see what was going on in the First Division. In its centre and left wing the fighting seemed to continue without interruption.

I was now the only officer left in my company; and of the seven non-commissioned officers who had originally belonged to it, only two were alive, not counting Bakal, to whom the major had given the command of another company, one that had lost all its officers. I made a re-arrangement, placing the two squads, of thirty men each, under the corporals. One was stationed behind the embankment, at the rear of the Russian works, facing west, towards the enemy's redoubts; the other was in reserve among the mud huts.

I closed Tereb's eyes, gave to his cold hand a last squeeze, and covered him with his great-coat. Bitterly I cursed the cruel fate that forbade my doing the same act of piety to the friend whom I had loved more than any I have had. But his body was a mile away from where I was, and I have never looked at his handsome face again. I was bewildered, and hardly knew how much I had lost.

I picked up a small Russian volume, well bound, with written Cyrillian characters on the blank page. I pocketed it, scarcely knowing why.

So far we had been victorious; but the worst obstacles were still unconquered: the formidable array of redoubts ahead of us.

So tired were my men, so heavily laden with cartridges, biscuits, and tools, amounting to half a hundredweight in excess of the usual burden, and so enfeebled by four weeks

of privations, that, the first flush of victory over, their total exhaustion became apparent; hope and confidence vanished, and from this moment I felt that all was over.

I have no clear recollection of the events that followed. At eleven, so far as I can ascertain, the Russians attacked our right flank, a quarter of an hour later our front also. For over an hour we held our positions successfully, in spite of terrific losses. In my company ten more men dropped; thus I had but fifty left. Our linked battalion suffered even more severely, being pressed hard by Russian and Roumanian infantry, and must have lost two-thirds of its strength.

Between twelve and one the action was again general and furious along the whole line. The dense atmosphere and the smoke prevented me from seeing how our First Division fared. The Russian shells came thick and fast. No order to advance and take again the offensive was given; it would have been useless against the huge masses opposed to us, for the enemy received reinforcements from all sides. Through my glasses I could see whole divisions coming up from the east.

At about one o'clock the major, who had meanwhile taken command of both battalions, Kazim Bey having been wounded, called me, and pointing to a Russian horse that peacefully nibbled the grass growing sparsely on the wall of a mud hut, said: 'Ride to the First Division, find the Mushir, or in any case Tahir, report that we are pressed in our right flank, and that to hold out longer without strong reinforcements is impossible; obtain instructions, and see what is going on.'

I placed the sad remnants of my company under the senior corporal, and rode off, along the rear of the front line of the First Division.

My impressions from this moment are confused. The first battalions which I passed seemed to be in good order and to hold out well; then I came across some where demoralisation had already set in, where men were leaving the ranks and turning towards the river: finally, as I approached the centre—the fighting going on furiously and uninterruptedly

all the time—I was drawn into the vortex of a most awful panic. The inevitable reaction after the brilliant initial success had set in, and the retreat, at first orderly, although not commanded, soon dissolved itself into a wild flight for safety—which every man foolishly and fondly believed he could find on the right river-bank, where we knew, or imagined, the Second Division was still unbeaten.

I had never been in a general retreat, and I do not care to dwell upon it, as it is far more terrible than the most desperate encounter. I was simply drawn along in a mad stream of men, horses, and vehicles. Resistance to this torrent of panic-stricken humanity was as useless as opposition to the rush of the incoming tide. The officers of all degrees did their utmost to restore order and get their men to make a stand against the enemy, who did not by any means press hard; on this cold day their faces were streaming with perspiration, and their efforts were well-nigh superhuman, though useless withal. To make inquiries in this crazy crowd was out of the question. I simply had to follow the torrent. As far as my eyes could reach, all over the plain, there were countless streams of soldiers making for the two bridges. The train got mixed with the infantry and the batteries, and the confusion baffles description. All the time the shells flew into our midst, tearing deep gaps in the crowds. Several times did I escape splinters only by a yard or two. My horse slipped into a ditch by the side of the track, happily without injuring me, and I continued on foot. How I traversed the two miles which separated me from the stone bridge I cannot say: the confusion in my memory is so great that to my mind the distance appears to have been only like a few hundred yards.

Some battalions from the Convoy Brigade, fresh and in good order, thrust themselves between us and the enemy, and effectually checked pursuit; but this I did not myself see; I learnt of it later. Pertev Bey, the commander of the Thirteenth Regiment, was the man who thus distinguished himself.

All that I could ascertain was that Osman had been wounded and carted across the river.

The passage over the bridge was a most terrible affair, the like of which I have never experienced before or since. It is a miracle, to my mind, that this vast panic-stricken crowd of men and horses, this dense jungle of carts and guns, managed to get across; but the fact remains that, with no more than two bridges available (the Opanetz bridge was utilised by only a few battalions, among them mine), the First Division, the Convoy Brigade, and the train—or what remained alive of these—were on the right bank before the Russian infantry was within a thousand yards.

It was only on the other side that the officers succeeded in stopping the retreat—not so much because there really was no other place to fly to (this the soldiers did not seem to realise), but because everyone considered himself in safety with the river between him and the enemy, and the Second Division, thought to be still unbeaten, protecting the flanks and the rear.¹²³

Arrived on the right bank, I pushed and fought my way through the now stationary crowd, in which the officers were restoring a little order and discipline, with a view of rejoining my battalion. In doing so I got among the vehicles of the Mussulman population. The pitiless shells soon followed us to this side of the river, and there were explosions of ammunition on all sides. The screams of the women were terrible, and unnerved many a sturdy man. Not in the most horrible dreams have I beheld anything half so frightful as this scene. I saw a demolished cart out of which had rolled the bodies of four women, who had been veiled to the unhallowed gaze of man all their lives, and who in death exposed their bleeding, mutilated nakedness, with garments torn to shreds. Meeting someone I knew, I learnt that the vehicle on which my girl-friend had travelled had been struck, and its inmates killed. So full of horrors was this day, and so bewildered was I, that I paid little heed to this fresh disaster.

On the right Vid bank, between Blasivatz in the south and Opanetz in the north, Osman Pasha's army made its last stand. The tactical formations had been so completely dissolved during the flight across the plain that no attempt was made to restore them; but the men organised themselves voluntarily into columns and took up a position along the bank, whilst the guns deployed on the slope of the hills. The carts were sent to the rear. The conduct of the officers in making these arrangements, despite the most formidable obstacles, and in the space of fifteen to thirty minutes, deserves the highest praise and admiration.

When dense columns of Russian infantry came within range we were ready for them, and for the last time the clatter of musketry-fire aroused the echoes of the devastated vine-slopes. The death-fight of the Plevna army had barely commenced when I, on my tramp towards the Opanetz bridge—where I hoped to find my battalion—came across a rough wooden structure, situated on the road between stone bridge and town, three hundred yards east of the former—a barn, or shed, or storehouse. The spot was comparatively deserted: half a dozen carts, whose oxen were dropping with fatigue, a small band of disheartened soldiers, and a surgeon binding up the wounds of some men who had been carried to the roadside. Before the building two Saloniki horsemen stood sentry, forbidding entrance to the wounded, who clamoured for admittance. Being dead-beat and hungry to starving-point, I sat down on a stone; and whilst I crunched a biscuit a cart drove up, and a man badly wounded in the leg was assisted into the building. So sallow and pain-drawn was his face that at first I failed to recognise Osman. There were tears in his eyes—tears of grief and rage rather than of physical torture—and on his countenance lay that awful, indescribable expression which says, 'The game is up, the end is come,' more plainly than words can define it, an expression rendered to perfection on Napoleon's face in Meissonier's picture of the retreat after Waterloo. I rose, and gave to my leader for the last time in the campaign the

military salute; for when next I greeted him, in the streets of Kharkoff, we were both prisoners.

Soon Adil, Yunuz (badly wounded), Tewfik, Ahmed, and others turned up, with Hassib, the surgeon, and an assistant. A fascination kept me rooted to the spot, for I felt instinctively that a great historical event was to take place within those dirty, dilapidated walls—the surrender of the Plevna army. All the time the fight along the river-bank continued without interruption, and the hail of shells came down with unchecked fury. Several fell in proximity to the building. The thunder of the guns, now in terrific crashes, now in a distant growl, was carried over the Bulgarian plains on the wings of the wind, accompanied by sprays of sleet and snow, and it is said that even the Balkan outposts of the Baba Konak army heard it, whispering to each other, in awe and wonder, that Ghazi Osman was making his last stand. The earth quivered, convulsed by the dying Empire's spasms, and affrighted Nature was in labour with a great event.

Aides-de-camp and orderlies came from all sides. I interrogated several, and their messages were identical: 'It is all up; further resistance is impossible; even if we hold the enemy's infantry in check for an hour or two longer, his artillery will simply annihilate us.' I heard of the surrender of the troops in Opanetz, and learnt that the enemy had occupied Plevna and all the abandoned redoubts north, east, and south of the town. Only between Krishin and Blasivatz the brigades of Hussein Vafsi and Sadik Pashas were maintaining their positions, although the troops here had suffered so severely that they were impatiently waiting for the hoisting of the white flag.

What passed inside the building was hidden from me; but I learnt later that Osman had obstinately refused to give way to the entreaties of his officers to stop the slaughter by consenting to a capitulation, until the continued arrival of messengers from all sides, imploring for a cessation of hostilities, induced him to give, broken-hearted, the order to hoist a white flag on the roof. Numerous messengers were

despatched to stop the firing. *Parlementaires* sent to the Russian general (Ganetzki) commanding the troops that were now coming up from all sides in serried ranks towards the Vid, asked for a capitulation with certain conditions; but Ganetzki demanded unconditional surrender, to which Osman had to agree. Tahir Pasha and General Ganetzki met on the battle-field and concluded the capitulation.

This happened after I had left the neighbourhood of the building. I had been on this spot already twenty minutes; that is, twenty minutes too long, for it was my duty to rejoin my battalion whatever the issue might be; so I walked away, with a heavy heart, in the direction of the Opanetz bridge. Soon I was in the midst of the train, which was in a state of terrible confusion, and after a great deal of pushing, dodging, and climbing, I found my battalion, or what remained of it, by the merest accident, much sooner than I had expected, as it had taken up a position along the Gritvitzka brook, facing north, the right bank of this river being already in the hands of the Roumanians. I reported what I had seen and heard to the major, and had the honour to take part in the last stand made by the remnants of the Sixth Brigade—for Edhem Pasha's other six battalions had meanwhile surrendered. The two battalions counted no more than four hundred men between them; my company was reduced to forty men. We stood in serried ranks along the little river; the men were cool and collected, and prepared for either alternative: the order to surrender or annihilation.

In this position we waited for the enemy to appear. At about 3.30 a dense column of Roumanian infantry came within sight on the opposite hills. Just as the last struggle had broken out a mounted messenger waving a white handkerchief came up from behind and ordered us to stop firing, as the army had surrendered. This we did, and so did, a minute later, the enemy. Almost at the same moment the cannonade in the south ceased of a sudden, and the last shot in the Plevna campaign had been fired. We waved whatever we had of white rags in our possession, the men laid

down their rifles, and we all sat or squatted on the ground, slush notwithstanding, dead-beat. Many fell asleep, and went with closed eyes through the ceremony of surrender. I was so bewildered and so tired that I hardly knew whether to rejoice at the cessation of a useless slaughter or to mourn over the defeat. I resigned myself to the inevitable, and deferred all the bitterness of reflection to a more convenient period of leisure. And thus ended the last of the four battles of Plevna, of which three had been victorious, and the fourth a defeat certainly, and far-reaching in its consequences, but as honourable a defeat as any ever sustained by the bravest army.

The course of the action is so clear in its outlines and so devoid of complications that only a few words need be added.

It was an hour or so before midnight on the 9th that the Russians had already discovered Bash Tabiya and some of the central redoubts to be abandoned, and had occupied them. After daybreak the Krishin redoubts and those on the Janik Bair were occupied, and detachments entered the town.

The tremendous rush of the First Division, led by Osman in person, attended by every officer of his Staff, had been uniformly successful; the front line of the hostile entrenchments had been seized, with twelve guns and some hundreds of unwounded prisoners. But here Todleben's magnificent dispositions were brought into play. An elaborate system for sending reinforcements to any given point of the line of investment from any other given point or points had been not only organised, but tried and rehearsed, with the result that the Russian leaders knew to a battalion, and within a fraction of an hour, what forces could be sent, and whence, and in what time, to any attacked portion of the circle. In each section several brigades were kept constantly ready to assist any other section.

The camp-wire flashed the news that the Turks had attacked Katalei's and Ganetzki's corps to every portion of the army of investment, and from Skobelev's detachment, as well as from the Roumanian section, strong reinforcements

started to aid the Guards and the Grenadiers, whilst elsewhere columns were organised. The Russian counter-attack threw confusion into the Turkish ranks. Osman was grievously wounded in the leg by a shell-splinter, and Tahir took the command. The latter, though he did, undoubtedly, all that lay within the limits of possibility, was not able to maintain the conquered positions. The troops, seeing no longer their beloved leader, who had headed the first assault, sword and revolver in hand, became demoralised; Tahir, himself slightly wounded, had suffered in reputation by the incident during the third battle which I have related in Chapter X., and Adil, the most trusted leader after Osman, was still on the right bank of the Vid, where the Fourth and Fifth Brigades, intended to protect the left flank and the rear, were so hotly engaged that the original scheme, by which they were to come to the aid of the First Division, could not be executed. The crazy flight across the Vid plain was the result, which, but for Pertev's battalions, would have terminated, there and then, in the annihilation of the army. At all points the Turks retreated across the river, and on the other side they made their last stand.

Meanwhile the Roumanians had brought about the surrender of the Sixth Brigade, under Edhem Pasha (my battalion and another excepted) by a despicable ruse. Thus the right Turkish flank was bared. The confusion, caused principally by the cumbersome train, was so great, and the exhaustion of the men so complete, that further resistance was simply impossible. Reinforcements reached the Russian lines from all points; the narrow confines of the locality which harboured the dense and disorderly crowd of the Turkish army became the focus of a terrible artillery-fire, which in another hour would have annihilated the remnants of the force, and nothing was left to Osman but to capitulate. Conditions having been refused, he had to surrender *à merci*. The Russians continued the cannonade for half an hour after the white flag had been hoisted, and after the Turks had ceased firing. As this can hardly have been due to a mistake,

or to ignorance of the Turkish surrender (the Russian writers make no attempt to explain the circumstance), the Russians were clearly guilty of a grave violation of both international custom and the laws of humanity.

The Russians state their losses at 2,100 in killed and wounded, of which figure 1,700 fell upon Ganetzki's Corps of Grenadiers. The Roumanian casualties were trifling. The Turkish losses cannot have been less than 5,000 (say 1,500 killed and 3,500 wounded), of which, roughly, 3,000 fell in the First Division, 1,500 in the Second, and 500 in train and convoy; 200 peaceful inhabitants, mostly women and children, were reported to have been killed or wounded; and the Bulgarians massacred at least 500 invalids, convalescents, and residents. Thus the action of the 10th killed or disabled, directly or indirectly, nearly 8,000 human beings.

On the part of the Russians and Roumanians, 80,000 to 90,000 men had been actually engaged, or thrice the number of the Turkish combatants. The army of investment was in its entirety four times stronger in men, and five and a half times stronger in guns, than the besieged force. The total strength of the Russian West Army showed a superiority over the Turkish Plevna army in the proportion of six to one in men and eight to one in guns.

Of the Turkish superior officers the following were killed: Colonel Veli Bey (late commander of Dolna Dubnik), Lieut.-Colonels Raif Bey and Abdullah Bey. Wounded: Osman Pasha, Tahir Pasha, Colonel Yunuz Bey, Lieut.-Colonels Kazim Bey, Eyub Bey, Rassim Bey, Pertev Bey.

Edhem Pasha's six battalions did not behave so well as they ought to have done; which is all the more astonishing as Edhem had repeatedly proved himself to be a brave and capable man, and as Colonel Suleiman Bey, who led four of the battalions (the Twelfth Regiment), had throughout the campaign, as commander of the Opanetz redoubts, won for himself the esteem and confidence of the whole army. In fact, it used to be a common saying among the soldiers that his tabiyas were the best-managed works in camp.

With this exception the conduct of the Plevna army in the last sortie is deserving of the highest praise.

It is my opinion that the action would have succeeded but for four circumstances : Firstly, the cumbersome train ; secondly, the heavy load the men had to carry ; thirdly, Osman's wound ; fourthly, Edhem's untimely surrender. It is bitter now to reflect on the sensation a successful sortie would have made in Europe ; on the consequences which would have resulted ; how it would have added to history the name of a victory more brilliant than any obtained in modern times ; how it would, in fact, have placed Osman among the few men who have accomplished the seemingly impossible. Even regarded as a defeat, the sortie still remains an act of magnificent heroism.

The fourth battle of Plevna proves that the Ottoman infantry, when wrought to the proper pitch, can excel also in offensive movements. That stupendous charge of the First Division alone would have made a mark in military history, even if Osman's army had never done anything else.

CHAPTER XV

THE SURRENDER

DECEMBER 10 AND 11, 1877

TWENTY weeks of campaigning had reduced my battalion to ten officers and 200 men, in lieu of the original nineteen officers and 650 men, and my company to one officer and forty men, in lieu of the original five officers and 175 men. Our linked battalion mustered only 150 men. These were the numbers that surrendered to a Roumanian colonel on December 10, while the dusk, sullen and threatening, closed over the fall of Plevna.

My major had received an ugly wound a minute before we laid down arms, and was taken away by a Roumanian cart. My former captain had been wounded, earlier in the day, in the Russian entrenchments, and had fallen into the enemy's hands when the battalion retreated. I have not seen either since. Bakal had a bruised leg caused by a fall, but he disdainfully declined surgical aid.

As the Roumanian soldiers seized our weapons I became possessed by an uncontrollable fury. I broke my sword, and thrust carbine, revolvers and ammunition into the Grivitza. A private with Semitic features perceived my Circassian dagger, but I managed to spoil it by breaking the point before handing it over. Another man annexed my field-glass. I never again saw my valise, which had been stored on one of the battalion's carts. I had saved a portion of my notes and manuscripts out of the wreck by carrying them like a breast-cuirass between uniform and undervest.

Having given vent to rage, I fell into the opposite mood, and, sitting down on a stone, I hid my face in my hands, and abandoned myself to the bitterest half-hour of reflection I have ever endured.

From my brooding I was roused by a cheerful voice and a light touch on the shoulder. Looking up, I beheld, by the light of a fire which some of our men had made up, the young Roumanian lieutenant with whom I had conversed so agreeably during the short truce made between Bash and Kanli Tabiyas on November 10. We were both surprised and pleased to see one another.

In the meantime our two battalions had been confined to a place an acre in extent, surrounded by numerous sentinels. From afar came the sounds of revelry: the Russians were making themselves blind drunk, after the manner of their kind.

My friend, whose name was Chavjeano,¹²⁴ spoke to the officer in command of the sentries, and took me and three others to his bivouac, a mile away, in one of our former Opanetz redoubts. Here he introduced us to his comrades, who, affable and hospitable, gave us hot grog, bread, and cold meat. How we devoured the food! We actually licked the mugs out. Our kindly hosts looked on with good-natured amusement, and I fancied I saw a tear glistening in Chavjeano's bright eyes.

A night as dark as its predecessor had set in, illumined by the lurid gleam of camp-fires. It froze hard, and snow commenced to fall. Music, singing, and quarrelling were heard in all directions.

Some Russian officers joined us, and to one I showed the book I had picked up. He said, 'It is a New Testament, and belongs to Major Kasikeff, of Ganetzki's Grenadiers. That inscription was written by his wife. If you like, I will take you to him. Maybe he will offer you the hospitality of his redoubt; thus you will escape the hardships of the next few days; for until our men get sober the prisoners will suffer.'

Chavjeano offered to accompany us. There seemed to be

a general holiday and an all-round dispensation from duties. Bidding farewell to the others, who, Turks, Russians, Roumanians together, were peaceably playing at dice for cigarettes, we three walked to the bivouac of the Grenadiers, by way of the spot where my battalion was encamped without fires or tents, in an open, snow-covered field, exposed to the cruel north wind. Cries of distress and rage greeted us, and we ascertained that the Russians, who had meanwhile relieved the Roumanian sentries, had robbed the prisoners, not only of money, watches, and valuables—that was to be expected of the Russian common soldiers—but also of biscuits. I gave away all that I had left, and followed my companions, who were as much distressed as I was. I stepped aside for a moment: some Russians jumped upon me and rifled my pockets; they had my watch and loose silver in their possession before my shouts had brought my protectors to the spot. The thieves decamped, and in the darkness pursuit was impossible. Happily they had left me five liras in gold, sewn into my flannel undervest.

With difficulty we made our way across the corpse-studded plain to the redoubts of the Grenadiers. I shudder to think that I must have passed close to Jack's body; but the night was pitch-dark, and I drowned grief in talking noisily to my companions.

Revelry and riot, drunkenness and disorder were rampant among the Grenadiers. After a great deal of inquiring, and getting false information from besotted beasts, we came, by following the camp-wire, to the major's redoubt.

We found the owner of the book, a kindly, bearded giant, who thanked me warmly for having restored to him his dear wife's parting gift. He took us into his mud hut, where others joined us, and tea, cognac, biscuits, and cigars were placed before us. I shall feel everlastingly grateful for that divine cup of tea; I would have paid cheerfully my five liras for it. Chavjeano and the Russian lieutenant had now to leave us, it being ten o'clock.

Major Kasikeff whispered to me: 'If you possess half a

lira, and can spare it, I can get you accommodation until you are sent away. I, personally, have no money. You will find the outlay well applied.'

I gave him the required coin, and, liking his honest face, I deposited the remaining four and a half liras with him, knowing them to be safe against the thievish propensities of the drunken privates.

The major went out, and returned in half an hour with a young surgeon's assistant, who bound up my left arm and made out a certificate of my being grievously wounded with so grave a face that I had to bite my lips to prevent my bursting into a laugh. My arm was sound enough, although its surface was shocking to behold, owing to the ravages of *Sarcoptes scabiei*. I was accommodated in Kasikeff's quarters with a couch formerly occupied by an officer who had been killed in the morning.

Having received some more cognac, a few wheatmeal cakes, and a hearty hand-shake from my amiable host, I fell asleep, dead-beat, as may be imagined. I slept for twelve hours without dreaming and without once awaking.

The next day (December 11) I spent in the major's hut, dividing my time between eating, drinking, talking, sleeping, and playing at whist, dice, and dominoes. At my request Kasikeff deducted from the money I had deposited with him a modest amount for my keep, which had been charged to him. The young surgeon examined my arm, in the presence of six or eight officers, who were in the conspiracy and enjoyed the fun hugely. How that arch-humbug kept his countenance, going the length of the farce without moving a muscle of his face, which was as devoid of expression as a blank sheet of paper, is more than I can understand.

For the conduct of Major Kasikeff and his brother-officers I have the highest admiration. Their chivalry and courtesy, their magnanimous and unselfish hospitality, stand out in bold contrast to the disgraceful behaviour of the common soldiery.

Lieutenant Chavjeano visited me, and brought me a wel-

come present in the shape of a pair of socks. As his handsome boyish face and bright manner reminded me of Jack, and being under the unwonted influence of strong drink, I poured the long string of my woes and sorrows into his patient ear. He sat by the side of my couch and held my hand with a woman's gentleness whilst I stammered out my maudlin effusions.

I went to rest early, and slept away my alcoholic sentimentality in an unbroken stretch of fourteen hours.

It was only later, in Bukarest and Kharkoff, that I learnt how the Turks less fortunate than myself had fared. I shall summarise what I heard from various sources.

The troops spent the night of the 10th to the 11th on the spots where they had found themselves at the termination of the battle, their arms having been taken from them and also, in most cases, their money, valuables, biscuits, and even their great-coats. No fires were allowed, no victuals or water dealt out. It froze and snowed.

On the 11th the prisoners were arranged into three sections: one batch was sent to the neighbourhood of Grivitza, another to the plain on the left Vid bank, the third remained on the right bank, between bridge and town. In all cases the troops encamped in the open; no distributions were made, and no attention was given to wounded or sick men. When they asked pitifully for food, the men were told that, according to the testimony of their officers, they had six days' biscuits with them; no account was taken of the fact that nine men out of ten had been robbed of their rations. The drinking of Vid water was prohibited, because the river had been polluted by dead bodies thrown into it; but no water was dealt out, and the men had to content themselves with melted snow and pool-water. The Turkish surgeons had been deprived of their instruments and drugs, these being utilised by the Russian doctors for their own wounded. Hundreds of maimed men literally rotted alive. No firewood was dealt out; but Russian soldiers sold pieces of the broken-up carts of the Turks at the rate of a quarter

lira (4s. 8*d.*) per small block. Only those who, like myself, had money concealed about their persons were able to purchase commodities. Russian, Polish, and Roumanian Jews sold bread at ten piastres (1s. 10*d.*) per loaf weighing twelve to sixteen ounces, clean water at five piastres per mug, execrable brandy at a lira per bottle. Cheese fetched five piastres the ounce, a single potato or turnip the same price. The officers' baggage was sold by the Russian privates at auction to the highest bidders. Men who resisted robbery were killed; for instance, the three or four convalescents placed in charge of Osman's private baggage, which latter was appropriated by the soldiers.

This state of things lasted for a week, when the first batch was sent to Sistova. It was a fortnight before all the prisoners had left the neighbourhood. During this time three to four thousand men succumbed to the privations and sufferings to which their captors exposed them. Only on eight days out of the fourteen food was dealt out, in the shape of doles of bread. To mention but one example of the tortures which the Russians inflicted upon their helpless captives: batches of starving, rag-clad men, during frost and snow, were sent without aim or purpose from one part of the camp to another; for instance, from Grivitza to Gorna Netropolié (13 miles), and back again the same or next day.

Many of the officers (but not by any means all) received hospitable treatment from their Russian brethren, who admitted, and were much distressed at, the barbarism displayed by their common soldiers, the complete breakdown of their commissariat, the disgraceful inefficiency of the hospital arrangements, the incapacity of the authorities, and the useless cruelty of some of the regulations.

Osman was visited in his shed, on the evening of the 10th, by Generals Ganetzki, Katalei, and Tchernat. A carriage was sent for him, and he was transferred to Plevna. On the road thither he met the Grand Duke Nicholas and the Prince of Roumania. The former complimented him on his magnificent defence, and treated him with marked distinc-

tion. With the rebel Prince Osman refused to shake hands. The officers cheered, and the soldiers presented arms. On the following day Osman was introduced to the Czar, who uttered the words which have become historical, and which the opinion of the world has heartily endorsed :

‘Je vous félicite de votre belle défense. C’est un des plus beaux faits de l’histoire militaire.’

The same afternoon Osman, escorted by a guard of honour composed of Cossacks and Rossiori, was transferred to Bogot, where he stayed in a tent for a fortnight, tended by Hassib, his late surgeon-in-chief, a German doctor, and some Sisters of the Red Cross. Thence he was sent, *via* Sistova and Bukarest, to Kharkoff, where he remained until his liberation in March, 1878. Throughout his captivity he was treated with a chivalry and a magnanimity which form a glaring contrast to the terrible sufferings the common soldiers had to undergo before reaching their destinations. In Kharkoff the Hero of Plevna received royal honours, and was lionised by the best society.

The scenes which transpired in Plevna town on the 10th and 11th surpass comprehension. I have heard from eyewitnesses of things which make one’s blood boil. The Bulgarians acted like savages and maniacs, and it is awful to reflect that they committed massacres, pillage, and nameless crimes to celebrate the victory of Christianity over Islam. The horrors attendant upon the surrender of Plevna—which could easily have been avoided—will for ever remain a stigma upon the name of the Bulgarian nation.

Thus was accomplished the fall of Plevna, after a defence which had lasted 143 days, and which, to quote the Czar Alexander II., was ‘one of the finest things done in military history.’ Of this period, sixty-three days were spent in rigid investment, *viz.* sixteen days the initial investment, commencing with September 8 and ending with the 24th, and forty-seven days the investment proper, from October 24 till the final sortie. The period embraces three great battles (those of July 30, September 11 and 12, and December 10),

four actions of second magnitude (Plevna, July 20 ; Pelishat, August 31 ; Lovdcha, September 3 ; Gorna Dubnik, October 24), and twenty minor engagements, not counting numerous skirmishes ; thus there was, on an average, an action every five days.

The struggle for Plevna cannot have cost the Russians less than 55,000 men, the Roumanians 10,000, the Turks 30,000, in dead and disabled, inclusive of deaths from illness ; comprising also the 8,000 to 9,000 prisoners who succumbed to exposure, starvation, or disease before reaching Russian soil. If we include the victims among the peaceful inhabitants, the total cost of the fight for Plevna in life and limb would not fall far short of 100,000 human beings.¹²⁵ Of this number, at least 40,000 died outright or succumbed subsequently to injuries, privations, or illness ; 20,000 alone were killed in action ; and in the neighbourhood of Plevna not less than 30,000 victims of an Emperor's folly, of statecraft and politics, sleep their last sleep.

From first to last, including all losses, and in round numbers, the Russians had placed 250,000 men (inclusive of Roumanians) and 700 guns in the field for the conquest of Plevna, the Turks 60,000 men and 100 guns for its defence.

But if the struggle for Plevna is full to repletion of horrors, the like of which I trust the reader will never dream of, much less witness in their awful reality, it is also rich in features which lay bare all that is most beautiful and most noble in human nature. Even if no moral, whether strategical or tactical, historical or political, could be drawn from it, even if it could not form the basis for a whole superstructure of conjectures for the future, it shows the sublime grandeur to which men can rise who fight (or imagine they fight) for a righteous cause. It is not my province to point out lessons, to draw conclusions, or to base prophecies on accomplished facts ; but I may be permitted to utter the solemn warning, embodied not only in the defence of Plevna, but in the whole Russo-Turkish War, the admonition expressed in the Turkish proverb : ' Düşmen karinjé issé fil ghibi zan

eilé,' *i.e.*, 'Though your enemy be as small as an ant, yet act as if he were as big as an elephant.'

To follow the general course of events it is necessary to enumerate briefly the occurrences which took place in both of the seats of war during the investment of Plevna.

Firstly, as regards Europe.

The Czarevitch's army lay along the left Black Lom bank, its opponent, Suleiman's army, in and around Rasgrad. The latter crossed the Lom with four divisions on November 19, and unsuccessfully attacked Metchka, the chief and central Russian position, on November 26. Suleiman then turned towards the Russian right wing, and took, on December 4, Marian, Slatinitza, and Elena. Slatinitza was recovered by the Russians two days later, but Elena, the principal point, remained in Turkish hands.

In and around Shipka things remained *in statu quo* between Radetzki's and Reuf Pasha's corps. The latter attacked on November 8, 11, and 21, and was repelled on each occasion. The Russians did not utilise their successes, but stayed in their old positions. No operations of importance were undertaken, in consequence of the snow.

Over Western Bulgaria the Russian invasion had spread, even before the fall of Plevna, from Etropol to Vratza in the south, and from Beshti to Lom Palankah in the north. Mehemed Ali's Baba Konak army was, and remained, useless. Osman's surrender left the enormous West Army of the Russians and the four Roumanian divisions available for other work, bared the left flank of the Turkish position in Europe, and rendered Eastern Bulgaria, as well as the western half of East Roumelia, precarious, if not untenable, for the Turks.

Secondly, as regards Asia.

The Russian right wing, under General Oklobchio, attacked Dervish Pasha in his position at Kutsubani, unsuccessfully, on November 11. With this exception nothing of importance occurred in this quarter.

Meanwhile the decisive blow had fallen in the centre.

Moukhtar Pasha had concentrated the rest of his army and reinforcements sent from other corps at Deveboyun. He was attacked here by General Heiman on November 4, and disastrously defeated. With the remnants of his force he fled to Erzerum. On the night of November 9-10 this fortress was unsuccessfully stormed by the Russians; it was then invested, but being well defended by Ismael Pasha's corps and the remnants of Moukhtar Pasha's corps, held out to the end of the war, when it was handed over to Russia in accordance with the terms of the Peace of San Stefano.¹²⁶ In the meantime, Kars had been taken by General Lazareff during the night of November 17-18, after a brave defence lasting thirty-two days.

The corps forming the Russian left wing, under General Tergukasoff, having been rendered available for other work by the junction of the detachment opposed to it (that of Ismael Pasha) with the remnants of Moukhtar's army, Tergukasoff united his column to that of General Heiman, and took part in the investment of Erzerum.

Excepting the operations at Erzerum, the campaign in Asia was practically at an end, the severe winter and exhaustion on both sides being the principal causes of this premature and spontaneous cessation of hostilities. In eight months of warfare, with the display of enormous forces, utilising the best strategical talent of the Empire (Loris Melikoff, Heiman, Lazareff), the Russians had won nothing of any note save one solitary success—the storming of Kars; after having been repeatedly defeated and repulsed. As regards the Turks, the campaign raised their reputation considerably in the eyes of newspaper readers, the majority of whom had predicted a walk-over for the Russians, as it was in the nature of things that the best forces of the Ottoman Empire should be concentrated in Europe; it had also placed Moukhtar Pasha's name prominently before the world, and had completely vindicated this officer's character, which had suffered in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875 and 1876.¹²⁷

Given an opportunity, and generally the man will be

found to meet it. This holds good with respect to the war of 1877 in three cases, and the individuals who rose to the occasions were (to use the metaphor employed by a contemporary German journal) the lion of Plevna, the bulldog of Shipka, and the fox of the Caucasus. The fourth chance—that offering itself in East Bulgaria—was lost for want of a man to seize it.

CHAPTER XVI

IN CAPTIVITY, AND CONCLUSION

DECEMBER 1877 TO APRIL 1878

WITH the incidents of my captivity I could fill a volume of respectable size. Some of my adventures were exceedingly pleasant (I did more love-making in those three months than in the remaining thirty-five years of my life) others, in the commencement, of a nature to make me shudder even now, with nearly two decades intervening. I shall confine myself to the bare outlines.

I stayed with Major Kasikeff for over a week, receiving from him and his comrades the utmost kindness. One bitterly cold morning, with two feet of snow on the ground, a cart (on which my host's influence and our ruse procured me a seat) took me to Verbitza, where I joined a detachment of 2,000 prisoners, escorted by Roumanians. Thence we travelled, *viâ* Sistova and Simnitzer, to Bukarest, crossing the Danube by the Russian pontoon bridge.

This journey, which lasted eight days, was the most dreadful part of my experience, lying as it did through snowclad country, in severe frost, with snowstorms and bitter winds. I and fifty or sixty others had seats on carts; the bulk of the prisoners and the escort had to tramp, except when kind-hearted Roumanian peasants lent vehicles for short distances. I saw at least 400 men drop, to be taken as little notice of as if they were so much offal, to die of starvation and exposure, or to be devoured by the wolves which prowled around our column. Over each man who fell a hideous crowd of crows, ravens,

and vultures hovered until he was sufficiently exhausted to be attacked with impunity. Three times we encamped in the open, with deep snow on the ground and the mercury at a goodly distance below freezing-point. Under these conditions I spent the Christmas night. In villages accommodation was generally found for a few hours; but so many processions of prisoners had already passed by the same route that the peasantry had become hardened. Some of the soldiers of the escort were extremely brutal; others (particularly the officers) displayed a touching kindness; the majority were as stolid and apathetic as their captives. A sorrier spectacle than that straggling train of weary, footsore, starving prisoners in tatters cannot be imagined.

Osman's army alone is said to have lost 5,000 men between Simnizza and Bukarest. Of this army, which at the time of its greatest strength counted 48,000 men, only 15,000 reached Russian soil, only 12,000 returned to their homes. It is computed that 50,000 Turks died whilst in Russian captivity.

In Bukarest our sufferings were at an end. In the streets ladies distributed coffee, broth, bread, cakes, tobacco, cigarettes, spirits. Our quarters in the barracks appeared to us like paradise.

Two days after my arrival I obtained leave on parole, and procured a consular introduction to a family of French emigrants. With them I stayed for a fortnight, receiving much friendship and hospitality. I fell ill, and was tenderly nursed by my host's wife and daughter. I recovered in time to report myself to the authorities when my parole had lapsed. I had telegraphed to my father for money, and received through a banker a goodly remittance. I had the first letter from home since the middle of October. My correspondence here, as well as in Kharkoff, was opened by the authorities. I met in Bukarest Bash Chawush Bakal and some men of my battalion.

One feature struck me as curious in the Roumanians: their intense hatred of the Jews, more violent even than that

of the Russians and the Austrians. The country was practically in their hands, which means, with a nation as much as with an individual, that he, she, or it has sunk to the lowest depth of degradation.

The day after the lapse of my parole I took train for Kharkoff, with several hundred fellow-prisoners and a Russian escort. Where the Roumanian railroad ended and the Russian system commenced we had to travel twenty miles in carts, but I have forgotten the names of the localities. Halfway to Kharkoff we stopped for two nights and a day at a small place, of which the name has likewise escaped my memory; we slept in the station.

Arrived in Kharkoff, I spent three days in barracks, and then procured comparative liberty on parole, which was renewed from week to week until my release in March. With it I obtained the proud privilege of paying for quarters and food, and that at a pretty stiff rate. I took pleasant private lodgings, walked about (having meanwhile received gratis a new outfit of garments and uniform from the stores the Russians had captured in Nikopoli, Sofia, and elsewhere), and enjoyed myself exceedingly, having completely recovered health, strength, and spirits. I—or my money—made many friends and numberless acquaintances. I had introductions and invitations galore, and was, in my own small way, feasted and fattened like a show beast, and in my circle glorified quite as much as Osman was in his by the *grand monde* of the town and the nobility of the neighbourhood. In short, I was treated with all the chivalrous kindness and the open-handed hospitality which are the characteristics of the educated Russians, and thanks to them my sojourn in Kharkoff belongs to the few pleasant episodes of my career.

So hardened had the privations of the campaign rendered me, that since my brief indisposition in Bukarest I have not had a day's illness, with the single exception of yellow fever in Rio de Janeiro. I have never had as much as a cold. The effects of the brutal propensities developed in warfare

wore off speedily, and I am now a mild and inoffensive being, whose conscience does not allow the killing of a flea or the plucking of a flower.

The story of the last period of the Russo-Turkish War, starting from December 10, is soon told.

Suleiman's army, after having been beaten at Metchka on December 12, retreated in disorder within the safe walls of Rustchuk and Rasgrad. Elena was abandoned on December 14. Suleiman himself was called to East Roumelia.

The West Army crossed the Balkans in two places (Baba Konak Pass, December 31; Troyan Pass, January 8), and occupied, on January 4, Sofia, which Mehemed Ali's army had abandoned, after having made a feeble stand at Tashkessen on December 31. The latter retreated to Küstendil.

The Turkish Shipka army was completely routed and annihilated in the bloody battle of Shainovo (January 9, 1878); thus, exactly a month after the fall of Plevna, the Shipka Pass outlet was opened to the Russians, after having been blocked by the Turks for just six months, at a cost of 50,000 men to the latter and 30,000 to the former.

Philippopolis was occupied on January 14, Adrianople (which the Turks had abandoned the day before) on January 20. In the meantime the Servians had crossed the frontier (December 14) and taken Ak Palankah (December 24) and Pirot (December 28) after desperate encounters. Also, the Montenegrins, who had at an earlier period gained various minor points (for instance, Nikchitz, September 8), were further successful, taking Antivari January 10, and Dulcigno January 19.

Nish was besieged by the Servians, Widdin by the Roumanians, Skutari by the Montenegrins.

Greece, not to be behindhand, sent an army across the frontier in January, but called it back (on England's and Austria's significant recommendation) when Turkey, exhausted as she was, took steps to check this fresh invasion.

Suleiman Pasha's scratch army in Eastern Roumelia

was repeatedly beaten, and had to retire, with the loss of its artillery, across the Rhodopé to Dédé Agach, thence by water to Constantinople.

On January 31 an armistice was made. Notwithstanding this, the Russians advanced upon Constantinople.

With the fall of Plevna the resistance of the Empire had completely broken down; but stupendous efforts were made to place the capital in a state of defence.

Mehemed Ali Pasha was entrusted with the task of organising an army, and all available troops were concentrated here. When he was sent as *parlementaire* to arrange the terms of peace, Moukhtar Pasha, called in haste from Erzerum, was entrusted with the command of the capital. Suleiman Pasha was arrested on his arrival in Constantinople and charged with high treason, Reuf Pasha, his successor in the command of the Shipka army, being the principal accuser.

Towards the end of February the Russians arrived before Constantinople. On March 3 the Peace of San Stefano was concluded, which established the independence of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia as an autonomous Principality, granted Roumania her royal crown, ceded territory to Servia (Nish, Pirot, and Vranja), to Montenegro (Antivari, Dulcigno, and a portion of Albania), to Roumania (Dobrudcha), and to Russia (Kars, Erzerum and Batum, and the Roumanian part of Bessarabia). But now Europe intervened, demanding that the Treaty should be put to the vote of a council of nations. England sent her fleet into the Sea of Marmora, thus preventing a Russian invasion of Constantinople; Austria, too, assumed a threatening attitude; and Roumania had been irritated so much that little was wanting to make her seize the sword against her former ally. Seeing that this time England was in earnest (to judge by her formidable preparations), Russia yielded, and the Congress of Berlin (June 13 to July 13, 1878) was the result. This modified the Treaty of San Stefano in so far that Eastern Roumelia remained part of the Ottoman Empire—not, however, for long, for in 1885 the province rebelled against the Turkish Government, and with-

out bloodshed united herself to Bulgaria. Greece was promised, and received later (in 1881), a 'boundary rectification': the districts of Arta, Trikkala, and Larissa. Austria was authorised to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Turkey, so far as her European possessions were concerned, had been cut and sliced so much that only a shadow of the proud Tartar Empire remained. Roumania had not only gained nothing for her pains, but, thanks to Russia, had actually lost, viz. her part of Bessarabia; for the sterile waste of the Dobrudcha was valueless to her. Russia, in exchange for enormous sacrifices in money and human life, had won two comparatively small districts, and had forfeited the goodwill of Europe. The greater part of the war indemnity remains unpaid to this day. Servia and Greece, who had done little or nothing, had gained considerable territory; Montenegro had doubled her dominions. Bulgaria had obtained nominal independence, but had placed herself under Russia's thumb, which it took her years of troubles and turmoil to shake off. Austria—a mere onlooker—had won two fine provinces; England, 'peace with honour.'

That was the result of a war which, in cruelty and unmitigated horrors, has had no equal since the First Napoleon's compulsory retirement from the business of Emperor and Manslayer.

From the moment when I had bidden farewell, on leaving home, to those who loved me, never a tear had dimmed my eyes: not throughout the unspeakable sufferings I had witnessed; not when my comrades in joys and sorrows dropped out of the ranks one after the other; not when hearts stouter than mine faltered in the despair of a hopeless situation; not when a bitter fate denied me the leisure of a second to grasp the hand, stiffening in death, of my fallen friend; not when our last appeal to arms failed, and the man of iron, the godlike hero himself, was frantic with grief and rage; not when, in the silent, snowclad plains, fellow-travellers, one by one, sank into death's frozen embrace, and closed, gratefully, their weary

eyes for ever. But when the landmarks dear to my childhood appeared by the side of the iron track ; when familiar roads and fields passed me in a whirling procession ; when steeples and streets, never forgotten, however unlovely, started out of the haze of a peaceful April sunset, like ghosts out of the golden past, to the music, indescribably sweet to my hearing, of the brake grinding against the wheels ; when at last I saw her on the platform who had waited for my home-coming through a weary year of pain, with patience and never-ending trust in God, as only the woman who loves can watch and wait ; when I beheld those dear eyes scanning wistfully the long chain of clattering cars—then all the pent-up passion of months of nameless horrors burst the barriers of restraint, and, blinded with tears, with my heart throbbing as if it would rend my breast asunder, I rushed into the arms that were stretched out to receive me—my mother's. In a mad freak I had left her, insolent of youth and conscious of strength ; and I came back longing, praying for, hardly daring hope for, her love. But love never dies. I heard her cry of joy, I felt the sob that shook her frame, I asked for no more than to rest where I was : for I had reached at last my home.

FINIS



APPENDICES

- A. ORDRES DE BATAILLE, &c.
- B. NOTES.
- C. TURKISH AND OTHER WORDS USED IN GEOGRAPHICAL NOMENCLATURE, IN THE COMPOSITION OF PROPER NAMES AND NICKNAMES, OR OTHERWISE EMPLOYED IN THIS VOLUME.



APPENDIX A

ORDRES DE BATAILLE, ETC.

CHAPTER IV. PAGE 120.

Ordre de Bataille of the Corps leaving Widdin for the Relief of Nikopoli on July 13, 1877.

Commander : Mushir Osman Pasha.

Chief-of-Staff : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.

Staff : Col. Tewfik Bey ; Lieut.-Col. Hairi Bey.

Principal Aide-de-Camp : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.

Commander of Artillery : Col. Ahmed Bey.

Commander of Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.

Surgeon-in-Chief : Col. Hassib Bey.

First Division.

Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.

First Brigade : Brigadier Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

First Regiment : Col. Emin Bey.

1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.

2 battalions infantry „

Second Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Husni Bey.

1 battalion infantry Nizamié.

2 battalions „ Redif.

Second Brigade : Brigadier Kara Ali Pasha.

Third Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Bey.

3 battalions infantry Redif.

Fourth Regiment : Major Kazim.

1 battalion infantry Nizamié.

2 battalions „ Redif.

2 batteries field artillery (6 lb.).

2 squadrons cavalry Nizamié.

Second Division.

Commander : Brigadier Hassan Sabri Pasha.

Third Brigade : Col. Said Bey.

Fifth Regiment : Col. Yunuz Bey.

1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.

2 battalions infantry „

Sixth Regiment : Major Issa.

1 battalion infantry Nizamié.

3 battalions „ Redif.¹²³

1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).

1 squadron cavalry Nizamié.

Corps Artillery.

Col. Ahmed Bey.

3 batteries field artillery (6 lb.).

2 „ horse „ (4 lb.).

1 battery mountain „ (3 lb.).

Corps Cavalry.

Col. Osman Bey.

3 squadrons cavalry Nizamié.

200 irregular cavalry.

Engineers.

1 company.

Total : 19 battalions, 9 batteries, 6 squadrons, 200 irregular cavalry, 1 company engineers ; or, 12,000 men with 54 guns.¹²⁴

CHAPTER V. PAGE 121.

*Arrangement of the March Column.**Vanguard.*

Commander: Col. Osman Bey.

50 Circassians.

1 squadron regular cavalry.

1 horse-battery.

1 battalion Chasseurs (of First Regiment).

1 company engineers.

Main Body.

Commander: Adil Pasha.

1 squadron regular cavalry.

 $\frac{1}{2}$ horse-battery.

100 Circassians	1 squadron regular cavalry	} Divided between the two flanks.

First Regiment infantry (less battalion Chasseurs) = 2 battalions.

2 batteries (6 lb.).

Commander and Staff.

1 squadron regular cavalry (escort to Staff).

Third Regiment infantry = 3 battalions.

2 batteries (6 lb.).

Fourth Regiment infantry = 3 battalions.

1 battery (6 lb.).

Sixth Regiment infantry = 4 battalions.

Rear and Train.

Commander: Col. Said Bey.

Second Regiment infantry = 3 battalions.

Train: 300 carts, 600 packhorses, 18 ammunition waggons.

Fifth Regiment infantry (less battalion Chasseurs)
 = 2 battalions.
 1 battery (6 lb.).
 1 mountain battery (3 lb.).
 1 squadron regular cavalry.

Rear-guard.

Commander : Col. Yunuz Bey.
 1 battalion Chasseurs (of Fifth Regiment).
 $\frac{1}{2}$ horse-battery.
 1 squadron regular cavalry.
 50 Circassians.

CHAPTER V. PAGE 131.

The *Ordre de Bataille* for July 19 was the same as that given with Chapter IV., with the addition of a brigade formed of the three battalions which had joined us in Keniéja and the three we had found in Plevna, as follows :

Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.
 Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ibrahim Bey.
 2 battalions infantry Nizamié.
 1 battalion „ Redif.
 Eighth Regiment : Col. Hamdi Bey.
 1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
 2 battalions „ Redif.

CHAPTER VII. PAGE 182.

Ordre de Bataille of the Plevna Army, July 29, 1877.

Commander : Mushir Osman Pasha.
 Chief of Staff : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
 Staff : Lieut.-Col. Hairi Bey ; Lieut.-Col. Raif Bey.
 Principal Aide-de-Camp : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.
 Commander of Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.
 Commander of Artillery : Col. Ahmed Bey.
 Surgeon-in-Chief : Col. Hassib Bey.

First Division.

Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.

First Brigade : Col. Emin Bey.

First Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.

1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.

2 battalions infantry Nizamié.

Second Regiment : Col. Omer Bey.

1 battalion infantry Nizamié.

2 battalions „ Redif.

1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).

1 „ horse „ (4 lb.).

Second Brigade : Brigadier Kara Ali Pasha.

Third Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Bey.

3 battalions infantry Redif.

Fourth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Suleiman Bey.

1 battalion infantry Nizamié.

2 battalions „ Redif.

1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).

2 squadrons cavalry Nizamié.

100 irregular cavalry.

Second Division.

Commander : Brigadier Hassan Sabri Pasha.

Third Brigade : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.

Fifth Regiment : Col. Yunuz Bey.

1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.

2 battalions infantry Nizamié.

Sixth Regiment : Col. Said Bey.

1 battalion infantry Nizamié.

2 battalions „ Redif.

1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).

1 „ mountain artillery (3 lb.).

Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.

Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ibrahim Bey.

2 battalions infantry Nizamié.

1 battalion „ Redif.

Eighth Regiment: Col. Hamdi Bey.
 1 battalion infantry Nizamié.
 2 battalions „ Redif.
 1 battery field artillery (6 lb.).
 2 squadrons cavalry Nizamié.
 100 irregular cavalry.

Reserve.

Commander: Brigadier Sadik Pasha.
 Adjutant: Lieut.-Col. Abdullah Bey.
 Infantry: Lieut.-Col. Hairi Bey.
 2 battalions Nizamié.
 7 „ „ Redif.
 Cavalry: Col. Osman Bey.
 2 squadrons Nizamié.
 2 „ „ Ottoman Cossacks.
 200 irregulars.
 Artillery: Col. Ahmed Bey.
 2 batteries (6 lb.).
 2 sections (4 guns), (6 lb.).
 1 battery horse (4 lb.).
 Engineers: 1 company.

Total in Plevna:—33 battalions, 9½ batteries, 8 squadrons, 400 irregular cavalry, 1 company engineers; or, 20,000 men with 57 guns.

Garrison of Lovdcha.

Commander: Brigadier Rifa'at Pasha.
 Adjutant: Col. Tewfik Bey.
 1 battalion Chasseurs Nizamié.
 1 „ „ infantry Nizamié.
 4 battalions „ „ Redif.
 1 battery (6 lb.).
 100 irregular cavalry.

Total of Plevna Army, including Lovdcha Garrison:—39 battalions, 10½ batteries, 8 squadrons, 500 irregular cavalry, 1 company engineers; or, 24,000 men with 63 guns.

Garrisons along the Roumanian and Servian Frontiers.

Commander: Brigadier Mehemed Isset Pasha (Widdin)

Widdin: 12 battalions, 1 squadron, 1 field battery, 500 heavy fort guns.

North-Western Frontier: 4 battalions.

Lom Palankah: 3 battalions, 30 fort guns.

Rahova and Bashti: 5 battalions, 20 fort guns.

Total: 24 battalions, 1 battery, 1 squadron, 550 heavy fort guns; or, 16,000 men.

Total of West Bulgarian Army, under Osman Pasha's Command:—63 battalions, 11½ batteries, 9 squadrons; or, 40,000 men with 69 guns (and 550 heavy fort guns).

The Commanders of the positions around Plevna were:—

Vid bridge: Major Kazim.

Opanetz redoubts: Lieut.-Col. Suleiman Bey.

Bukova redoubts: Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.

Janik Bair redoubts: Col. Emin Bey.

Bash Tabiyas: Brigadier Kara Ali Pasha.

Headquarters batteries: Col. Ahmed Bey.

Two large redoubts south of the Bulgareni road and east of headquarters hill: Brigadier Tahir Pasha, Brigadier Atouf Pasha.

'Green Hill' redoubt: Lieut.-Col. Ibrahim Bey.

Redoubt on the Krishin road: Col. Yunuz Bey.

Plevna (town): Major Moussa.

CHAPTER IX. PAGE 221.

Ordre de Bataille of the Expeditionary Force sent from Plevna towards Pelishat on August 30, 1877:—

Commander: Mushir Osman Pasha.

Second: General of Division Hassan Sabri Pasha.

- Chief-of-Staff : Col. Tewfik Bey.
 First Brigade : Brigadier Emin Pasha.
 First Regiment : Col. Omer Bey.
 4 battalions.
 Second Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.
 4 battalions.
 Second Brigade : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
 Third Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Abdullah Bey.
 4 battalions.
 Fourth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Raif Bey.
 4 battalions.
 Reserve and Artillery : Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.¹³⁰
 3 battalions infantry.
 3 batteries, @ 6 guns.
 Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.
 7 squadrons regulars.
 2 ,, Ottoman Cossacks.
 10 ,, Saloniki auxiliaries.
 300 Circassians.
 Total : 19 battalions, 3 batteries, 19 squadrons, 300
 Circassians ; or, 13,000 men with 36 guns.

CHAPTER IX. PAGE 229.

Ordre de Bataille of the Plevna Army, September 6, 1877.

- Commander : Mushir Osman Pasha.
 Chief-of-Staff : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.
 Staff : Brigadier Sadik Pasha ; Colonels Hamdi Bey, Hairi
 Bey ; Lieut.-Colonels Raif Bey, Abdullah Bey.
 Principal Aide-de-Camp : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.
 Commander of Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.
 Commander of Artillery : Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.
 Surgeon-in-Chief : Col. Hassib Bey.
 (Each regiment consists of three battalions).

First Division.

Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.

First Brigade : Brigadier Edhem Pasha.

First Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.

Second „ : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Bey.

Second Brigade : Brigadier Kara Ali Pasha.

Third Regiment : Col. Hafouz Bey.

Fourth „ : Col. Suleiman Bey.

2 squadrons regular cavalry and a detachment
Circassians.

4 batteries @ 6 guns.

Second Division.

Commander : General of Division Hassan Sabri Pasha.

Third Brigade : Col. Tewfik Bey.

Fifth Regiment :

Sixth „ : Col. Said Bey.

Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.

Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ibrahim Bey.

Eighth „ : Col. Omer Bey.

2 squadrons regular cavalry and a detachment
Circassians.

3 batteries @ 6 guns.

Third Division.

Commander : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.

Fifth Brigade : Lieut.-Col. Riza Bey.

Ninth Regiment :

Tenth „ : Major Issa.

Sixth Brigade : Col. Yunuz Bey.

Eleventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ali Riza Bey.

Twelfth „ : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.

2 squadrons regular cavalry and a detachment
Circassians.

2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Reserves.

Commander : Brigadier Rifa'at Pasha.

Infantry : Brigadier Emin Pasha

10 battalions.

Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.

1 squadron regular cavalry (escori to head-quarters).

2 squadrons Ottoman Cossacks.

10 „ Saloniki auxiliaries.

1 detachment Circassians.

Artillery : Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.

3 batteries @ 6 guns.

1 company engineers.

Total : 46 battalions infantry, 19 squadrons cavalry, 500 Circassians, 12 batteries, 1 company engineers ; or, 30,000 men with 72 guns.

Summary of the Forces under Osman Pasha's Command.

	Battalions.	Squadrons.	Batteries.			
Plevna Corps : Osman Pasha	46	19	12			
North-western Corps : Mehemed Isset Pasha (Widdin) :—						
Widdin	12	1	1			
Along the North-western Frontiers	4					
Lom Palankah	3					
Rahova	5					
	—	—	—	24	1	2
Balkan Corps : Chefket Pasha (Orkanyé).						
Orkanyé	6	1	2			
Kornatzî and Tashkessen	12	1	1			
Étropol	4					
Sofia	6	0	2			
	—	—	—	28	2	5
Reinforcement Column concentrating in Or- kanyé under Ahmed Hifzi Pasha ¹³¹	17	5	2			
Total of forces under Osman's command	115	28	20			

CHAPTER IX. PAGE 231.

List of the Fortifications and Positions, with their Commanders and Garrisons, on September 6, 1877.

Left Wing.

	Battals.	Guns.
Opanetz redoubts : Suleiman Bey	2	6
Bukova „ : Mehemed Nazif Bey	4	3
Janik Bair redoubt (west) : Adil Pasha	3	6
„ „ „ (east) : Edhem Pasha	2	3
Bash Tabiya : Hafouz Bey	2	4
Kanli „ : Kara Ali Pasha	1	2
Totals	14	24

Centre.

Atouf Tabiya : Atouf Pasha	2	4
Araba „ : Tewfik Bey	3	4
Omer „ : Omer Bey	3	2
Ibrahim „ : Ibrahim Bey	2	4
Chorum „	2	4
Totals	12	18

Right Wing.

Tahir Tabiya : Tahir Pasha	3	4
Issa „ : Major Issa	1	—
Kavanlik „ : Riza Bey	1	2
Yunuz „ : Yunuz Bey	2	3
Talahat „ : Talahat Bey	1	3
Milas „ : Ali Riza Bey	1	—
Baghlarbashi „ : Major Rassim	1	—
Totals	10	12

Reserve.

	Battals.	Guns.
Ikhtihat Tabiya : Rifa'at Pasha	3	6
Headquarters Hill : Ahmed Pasha	4	6
In Plevna	2	—
Vid bridge : Major Kazim	1	6
Totals	10	18

Summary.

	Battals.	Guns.	Squads.
Left wing, or First Division : Adil Pasha	14	24	2
Centre, or Second Division : Hassan Sabri Pasha	12	18	2
Right wing, or Third Division : Tahir Pasha	10	12	2
Reserve : Rifa'at Pasha	10	18	13
Totals	46	72	19

CHAPTER XI. PAGE 293.

Ortre de Bataille of the Division marching from Orkanyé to Plevna on September 18, 1877:—

Commander : General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

Chief-of-Staff : Lieut.-Col. Isset Bey.

First Brigade : Brigadier Edhem Pasha.

First Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ali Mehemed Bey.
3 battalions.

Second Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Natou Bey.
3 battalions.

Second Brigade : Brigadier Haki Pasha.

Third Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Eynb Bey.
3 battalions.

Fourth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Tahir Bey.
3 battalions.

Reserve : 5 battalions : Col. Veli Bey.

Cavalry : 6 squadrons regulars : Col. Bekir Bey.

Artillery : 2 batteries @ 6 guns (one 6 lb., one 3 lb.).

Engineers : 2 companies.

Total : 17 battalions, 6 squadrons ; or, 10,000 men with 12 guns, having charge of 500 carts with victuals, 50 artillery-ammunition waggons, 500 packhorses and 200 carts with infantry ammunition, and 2,000 head of cattle.¹³²

CHAPTER XI. PAGE 301.

*Ordre de Bataille of the Plevna Army between
October 8 and 24, 1877 :—*¹³³

Commander : Mushir Ghazi Osman Pasha.

Chief-of-Staff : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.

Staff : Brigadiers Emin Pasha, Hussein Vasfi Pasha ;
Colonels Hamdi Bey, Hairi Bey ; Lieut.-Cols.
Mehemed Nazif Bey, Mehemed Bey.

Principal Aide-de-Camp : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.

Commander of Cavalry : Col. Osman Bey.

Commander of Artillery : Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.

Commander of Engineers : Lieut.-Col. Tiflik Bey.

Commander of Headquarters : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed
Nazif Bey.

Commander of Plevna (town) : Lieut.-Col. Hussein Bey.

Surgeon-in-Chief : Col. Hassib Bey.

First Division.

(North Front, from Opanetz to Bash Tabiya.)

Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.

	Battalions.
First Brigade : Brigadier Sadik Pasha.	
First Regiment : Col. Hafouz Bey	3
Second „ : Lieut.-Col. Latif Bey	3
Second Brigade : Brigadier Edhem Pasha.	
Third Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Kazim Bey	3
Fourth „ : Col. Hairi Bey	3
Third Brigade : Col. Suleiman Bey.	
Fifth Regiment	3
Sixth „	3
	18

Second Division.

(South-east Front, from Ibrahim Tabiya to the Tultchenitza Valley.)

Commander: General of Division Hassan Sabri Pasha (convalescent).—Brigadier Atouf Pasha (acting).

	Battalions.
Fourth Brigade: Brigadier Atouf Pasha.	
Seventh Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Raif Bey . . .	3
Eighth „ : Lieut.-Col. Eyub Bey . . .	3
Fifth Brigade: Col. Omer Bey.	
Ninth Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Natou Bey . . .	3
Tenth „ : Lieut.-Col. Zini Bey . . .	3
	12

Third Division.

(South and West Fronts, from the Tultchenitza to the Vid bridge.)

Commander: Brigadier Tahir Pasha.

	Battalions.
Sixth Brigade: Brigadier Omer Tafir Pasha.	
Eleventh Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Pertev Bey . . .	3
Twelfth „ : Lieut.-Col. Abdullah Bey. . .	3
Seventh Brigade: Col. Yunuz Bey.	
Thirteenth Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Tahir Bey . . .	3
Fourteenth „ : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey. . .	3
Eighth Brigade: Col. Said Bey.	
Fifteenth Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Ali Mehemed	
Bey	3
Sixteenth „	2
	17

Fourth Division.

(Orkanyé Road, from Dolna Dubnik to Telish.)

Commander: General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.

	Battalions.
Ninth Brigade: Brigadier Haki Pasha.	
Seventeenth Regiment	3
Eighteenth „	3

	Battalions.
Tenth Brigade: General of Division Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.	
Nineteenth Regiment: Col. Veli Bey	5
Twentieth „ : Lieut.-Col. Isset Bey	6
	17

Fifth Division.

(Reserves: in Araba and Ikhtihat Tabiyas and in Plevna town.)

Commander: Brigadier Tewfik Pasha.

	Battalions.
Eleventh Brigade: Brigadier Hussein Vasfi Pasha.	
Twenty-first Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Hourshid Bey	5
Twenty-second „	5
Twelfth Brigade: Brigadier Emin Pasha (convalescent).—Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey (acting).	
Twenty-third Regiment: Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey	5
Twenty-fourth „ : Lieut.-Col. Rassim Bey	5
	20

Summary of Infantry.

First Division: Adil Pasha (north front)	18
Second „ : Hassan Sabri Pasha (south-east front)	12
Third „ : Tahir Pasha (south and west fronts)	17
Fourth „ : Ahmed Hifzi Pasha (Orkanyé road)	17
Fifth „ : Tewfik Pasha (Reserves).	20
	84

Cavalry.

Commander: Col. Osman Bey.

Regular cavalry: Col. Bekir Bey.

13 squadrons (2 regiments) cavalry Nizamié.

2 „ Ottoman Cossac

Auxiliary cavalry : Lieut.-Cols. Chefki Bey and Haki Bey.

10 squadrons (1 regiment) Saloniki auxiliaries.

1,000 Circassians, formed into 2 regiments of 6 squadrons each.

Artillery.

Commander : Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.

9 batteries @ 6 guns field artillery (6 lb.)

4 „ „ 6 „ horse „ (4 lb.)

3 „ „ 6 „ mountain „ (3 lb.)

Total, 96 guns.

Engineers.

3 companies : Lieut.-Col. Tiflik Bey.

Volunteer Guard to Headquarters.

1 battalion Volunteers of the Ottoman Union	} Lieut.-Col.
(foot).	
1 squadron Volunteers of Vodena (mounted).	} Mehemed
	} Nazif Bey.

Total of Plevna Army.

	Men.
Infantry : 84 battalions	38,000
Cavalry : 25 squadrons	2,000
Circassians: 12 „	1,000
Artillery : 16 batteries	2,000
Engineers : 3 companies	200
Volunteers : 1 battalion and 1 squadron .	800
Convalescents and non-combatants.	4,000
	48,000

*List of Redoubts and Positions occupied by the Plevna Army end of October, 1877, with their Infantry Garrisons and Commanders.*¹³⁴

First Division.—North Front.

Opanetz redoubts	6 battalions	Suleiman Bey.
Bukova redoubts	3 „	Kazim Bey.

Yeni Tabiya ¹³⁵	2 battalions	Hairi Bey.
Janik Bair redoubt west	3 „	Edhem Pasha.
Janik Bair redoubt east	2 „	Latif Bey.
Bash Tabiya	2 „	Hafouz Bey.

Second Division.—South-east Front.

Chorum Tabiya	1 battalion	
Ibrahim „	2 battalions	Raif Bey.
Atouf „	3 „	Atouf Pasha.
Omer „	3 „	Omer Bey.
Tahir „	3 „	Natou Bey.

Third Division.—South and West Fronts.

Issa Tabiya	} 1 battalion.	
Kavanlik „		
Baghlarbashi „		
Milas „	1 „	Abdullah Bey.
Talahat „	1 „	Talahat Bey.
Yunuz „	2 battalions	} Yunuz Bey.
Kütchük ¹³⁶ „	1 battalion	
Haji Baba „	1 „	Ali Mehemed Bey.
Ghazi Osman „	1 „	Tahir Bey.
Brestovitz redoubt	1 „	
Ternina road redoubt	1 „	
Baghché Tabiya ¹³⁷	1 „	
Pertev Tabiya	2 battalions	Pertev Bey.
Blasivatz redoubt No. 1	} 1 battalion.	
„ „ „ 2		
Vid bridge „	2 battalions	Said Bey.
Namasgula Tabiya (south)	} 1 battalion. ¹³⁸	
„ „ (north)		

Fourth Division.—Orkanyé Road.

Dolna Dubnik	5 battalions	Veli Bey.
Gorna Dubnik	6 „	Ahmed Hifzi Pasha.
		Second: Isset Bey.
Telish	6 „	Haki Pasha.

Fifth Division.—Reserves.

Araba Tabiya	5 battalions	Hussein Vasfi Pasha.
Ikhtihat „	5 „	Tewfik Pasha.
Headquarters ¹³⁹	1 battalion	Mehemed Nazif Bey.
Plevna (town)	5 battalions	Hussein Bey.
Between town and Vid bridge	5 „	Rassim Bey.

CHAPTER XIII. PAGE 362.

*Ordre de Bataille of the Plevna Army for the Sortie of
December 10, 1877 :—*¹⁴⁰

Commander : Mushir Ghazi Osman Pasha.

Chief-of-Staff : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.

Staff : Cols. Veli Bey, Hairy Bey ; Lieut.-Col. Tahir Bey.

Principal Aide-de-Camp : Lieut.-Col. Talahat Bey.

Commander of Artillery : Brigadier Ahmed Pasha.

Commander of Cavalry : Colonel Bekir Bey.

Commander of Train and Convoy : Col. Said Bey.

Surgeon-in-Chief : Col. Hassib Bey.

First Division.

Commander : Brigadier Tahir Pasha.

First Brigade : Brigadier Atouf Pasha.

First Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Raif Bey.

4 battalions.

Second Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Eyub Bey.

4 battalions.

2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Second Brigade : Col. Yunuz Bey.

Third Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Zini Bey.

4 battalions.

Fourth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Abdullah Bey.

4 battalions.

2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Third Brigade : Brigadier Tewfik Pasha.

Fifth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Mehemed Nazif Bey.
4 battalions.

Sixth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Rassim Bey.
4 battalions.

2 batteries @ 6 guns.

1 regiment (5 squadrons) cavalry Nizamié : Lieut.-Col.
Chefki Bey.

Second Division.

Commander : General of Division Adil Pasha.

Fourth Brigade : Brigadier Hussein Vasfi Pasha.

Seventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Natou Bey.
4 battalions.

Eighth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Hourshid Bey.
4 battalions.

2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Fifth Brigade : Brigadier Sadik Pasha.

Ninth Regiment : Col. Hafouz Bey.
4 battalions.

Tenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col.-Latif Bey.
4 battalions.

2 batteries @ 6 guns.

Sixth Brigade : Brigadier Edhem Pasha.

Eleventh Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Kazim Bey.
4 battalions.

Twelfth Regiment : Col. Suleiman Bey.
4 battalions.

2 batteries @ 6 guns.

1 regiment (4 squadrons) cavalry Nizamié } Lieut.-Col.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ „ (5 „) Saloniki auxiliaries } Haki Bey.

Convoy Brigade.

Seventh Brigade : Col. Said Bey.

Thirteenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Pertev Bey.
5 battalions.

Fourteenth Regiment : Lieut.-Col. Ali Mehemed Bey.

5 battalions.

2 batteries @ 6 guns.

2 squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks.

1 squadron mounted volunteers of Vodena.

Corps Cavalry.

$\frac{1}{2}$ regiment (5 squadrons) Saloniki auxiliaries	} Colonel Bekir Bey.
2 squadrons Circassians	

Reserve Artillery.

1 battery, 4 guns (6 lb.).

Engineers.

3 companies : Lieut.-Col. Tiflik Bey.

Escort to Headquarters.

1 battalion volunteers of the Ottoman Union.

Summary.

	Men.
Infantry : 58 battalions	22,000
Cavalry : 9 squadrons regulars	} 1,500
2 „ Ottoman Cossacks	
10 „ Saloniki auxiliaries	
2 „ Circassians (200)	
1 „ mounted volunteers of Vodena	
Artillery : 14 batteries (@ 6 guns) } Total :	} 1,500
1 battery (@ 4 guns) } 88 guns. ¹⁴¹	
Engineers : 3 companies	} 9,000
Escort to Headquarters : 1 battalion	
Non-combatants, convalescents, and wounded	
Total	34,000

APPENDIX B

NOTES

NOTE 1. INTRODUCTION. PAGE 1.

THE year 1288 is taken as the commencement of the Turkish Empire, but Constantinople was not conquered until 1453.

NOTE 2. CHAPTER II. PAGE 14.

I must except the short-lived first, and only, Turkish Parliament, which was opened on March 19, 1877. Instead of hailing it as a blessed innovation, full of promise and grand possibilities, the Turks looked upon it partly with the characteristic apathy of their race, partly with wondering suspicion, as a new instrument for the extortion of taxes. Other attempts to institute a constitutional *régime* died a violent death; the Turkish Parliament, born in the labour-pains of terrific political excitement, expired in infancy from want of vitality. Most modern Constitutions were demanded, and obtained, by the people; the Turkish Constitution was forced by the rulers down the nation's throat like a pill, not like a newly discovered delicacy. Having swallowed one pill, the Turks did not ask for another.

NOTE 3. PAGE 16.

The Turk applies the term 'Frank' indiscriminately to every Western European. It is not necessarily used in an offensive sense. We employ the word 'Tartar' (correctly Tatar) in a similarly comprehensive and occasionally reproachful manner.

NOTE 4. PAGE 18.

I have used throughout the English plural termination *s* to Turkish words. The Turkish plural is *'*, pronounced *lar* or *ler*, according to the rules of euphony: for instance, *adam* (man), plural *adamlar*; *evret* (woman) plural *evretler*.

NOTE 5. PAGE 18.

Artillery candidates receive a special, most exhaustive, and really excellent training, as good as that in the German Army. They enter as first-lieutenants, sometimes (if they have satisfactorily gone through an extra course) as captains. The artillery is independent of the Seraskier; it has its own 'Grand Master,' who is responsible only to the Sultan, its own administration, its own schools.

NOTE 6. PAGE 20.

This state of things exists to a terrible extent in Asiatic Turkey, notably in Bagdad, where also the Jews are offenders, and in Persia.

NOTE 7. PAGE 20.

I do not know why these restrictions were imposed; I was told it had something to do with religion. They were rescinded and reimposed in an apparently arbitrary manner.

NOTE 8. PAGE 23.

The word is pronounced 'fess,' not 'fez,' being spelt *فيس*.

NOTE 9. PAGE 24.

The Russian battery has eight guns, except the horse-artillery of the Cossacks, which has six guns to the battery.

NOTE 10. PAGE 24.

The word *arabji* has nothing to do with Arabs. It is derived from *araba* (cart). There may be an etymological connection.

NOTE 11. PAGE 25.

Stamboul proper (called Istambouli by the Turks) is that part of European Constantinople which lies south of the Golden Horn and within the city walls. In a wider sense, the quarters and suburbs north of the Golden Horn, and even the Asiatic suburbs, are included in the term; used thus mostly by European writers.

NOTE 12. PAGE 27.

Mahmoud Damad Pasha ('Damad' is son-in-law) married, 1858, a fifteen-year-old daughter of Sultan Abdul Mejid (1839 to 1861), grew rich by malpractices and dishonesty, obtained a fatal influence over his

brother-in-law, Sultan Abdul Hamid II.—who, by the way, is a worthy, well-meaning man, but often mistaken in his selection of counsellors and projects; became Grand Master of Artillery and member of the Council of War, although he knew of gunnery and strategy absolutely nothing; exercised in 1877 and 1878, from motives of cowardice, greed, and envy, an influence over the fate of the Empire of which the true extent will never be known; became, 1878, Seraskier; was deposed and exiled in 1879 for having given secret orders during the war; was pardoned in 1880; was tardily sentenced to death in 1881 for his share in the assassination of Sultan Abdul Aziz, his marriage being dissolved; was pardoned and exiled to Arabia, where he died, 1884.

NOTE 13. PAGE 29.

Von der Goltz Pasha, a German general in the Turkish service, characterises the Turkish nation as 'honest, proud, brave, and deeply religious,' but 'suffering under the absence of a guiding aristocracy' (he has never been in England).

NOTE 14. PAGE 30.

The highest of all military schools is the Erkiani Harb Mektebi (School for Officers of the General Staff), where the training is excellent. On the island of Chalki, in the Sea of Marmora, there is a naval college with English masters. There are nine elementary military schools (Rushdiés) in Constantinople, and two Idadiés, which constitute the intermediary stage between the Rushdié and the Mekteb Harbi.

NOTE 15. PAGE 31.

As in the languages using Arabic characters (Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Hindustani) the majority of vowels are not represented, the art of reading is more difficult to acquire, even to natives, than with the languages written in Latin or German characters. An English boy who has learnt to read English has learnt less than the Turkish boy who has learnt to read Turkish.

NOTE 16. PAGE 33.

Moltke himself admitted that his mission to Turkey had been a failure; he wrote home in these terms when the forces organised by him had been routed in the battle of Nissib (1839), attributing the result to the raw material of which the Turkish Army is formed. With this I humbly venture to disagree; the reason was that Prussian institutions did not, and do not, suit the temper of the Ottoman people.

NOTE 17. PAGE 33.

The Circassian and Georgian girls were at that time (and are, secretly, now) purchased; were therefore slaves, often concubines, having as such

a recognised legal and moral standing, utterly unlike European par-
amours, becoming wives at maternity. They were invariably treated well,
and appeared to be perfectly happy. This is not slavery as the term is
understood when applied to Africa, but a sale by poor parents of their
daughters, with the latter's consent, or a voluntary sale of the girls
themselves.

NOTE 18. PAGE 34.

I have often been asked in Germany, how a person's intellectual
capacity can be gauged by a scale of numbers, when it must be clear to
the meanest understanding that it is impossible to fix a unit of measure-
ment.

NOTE 19. PAGE 35.

These barracks, like all those in Constantinople, are most imposing
buildings.

NOTE 20. PAGE 37.

The distances are :—

	Miles.
Constantinople to Adrianople . . . =	198
Adrianople to Philippopolis . . . =	112
Philippopolis to Bellova . . . =	42
	352

NOTE 21. PAGE 38.

Haji = pilgrim (a courtesy title given in Mahomedan countries to men
who have made the Haj, *i.e.* the Pilgrimage to Mecca, the object and goal
of a true Moslem's entire career); Aga = official; Dedashti = broker;
bin = the son of; Dellal = ironmonger; Baghdadi = coming from Bagdad;
Malektijar = principal merchant, literally, king of the merchants, a title
given to the most respected trader of each community in Asiatic Turkey
and Persia.

NOTE 22. PAGE 39.

I was much troubled with the Mahomedan Calendar, with its lunar
months of twenty-nine days and its years commencing at 622 A.D. (the
Moslems wrote 1294 in 1877); and with the Turkish time, which fixes
twelve o'clock at sunset, whenever that may take place, differing thus from
day to day.

NOTE 23. CHAPTER III. PAGE 41.

Santo (or San) Stefano, seven miles west of Constantinople, on the Sea
of Marmora, was originally a settlement of Italian fishermen, and is now
an almost exclusively Frankish colony, with fine villas of Greek and
Armenian merchants, and a few summer residences of Turkish *grandees*.
It has 2,000 inhabitants.

NOTE 24. PAGE 41.

There was at that time only one train daily between Constantinople and Adrianople; but between Constantinople and Kütchük Chekmedjé five additional local trains were run; to these belonged the one by which we had travelled. I presume the desire of the authorities to avoid an accumulation of troops in the little Yedi Kulé station next morning was the reason of their having despatched us the previous night to Kütchük Chekmedjé. Also, between Adrianople and Bellova there was only one daily train.

NOTE 25. PAGE 45.

From Kuléli Burgas (two stations before Adrianople) to Bellova the railroad follows the Maritza; the landscape is hilly, except near Philippopolis, where the valley of this river is so wide as to give the impression of a plain.

NOTE 26. PAGE 49.

At the present day the Oriental Express takes you, without change of carriage or lengthy stoppage, from Vienna. *viâ* Belgrad, Nish, and Sofia, to Constantinople.

NOTE 27. PAGE 49.

The continuation of the railroad to Sofia was then in progress, although at Bellova I saw no actual work being done.

NOTE 28. PAGE 51.

The Circassians—in any case, those I met—were settlers in Bulgaria and East Roumelia; I saw none who came from the Caucasus. Both Asiatic and European Turkey were overrun with Circassians, formerly residing on Russian territory, during and after the Crimean War. In 1850 Russia had 500,000 Circassian subjects, all Christians; in 1864, 120,000; three-fourths of the tribe had emigrated to Turkey and become Mahomedans. This is the result of 'Christian' Russia's government. These Circassians were, I presume, the prototype of that ridiculous newspaper bogey, the 'Bashi-Bazonk,' a word which I never heard in Turkey.

NOTE 29. PAGE 53.

It speaks well for the morality of the Turkish soldiers that there was not a single case of gonorrhœa or kindred disorders in Bellova, as I ascertained from one of the Philippopolis men.

NOTE 30. PAGE 56.

I repeat that this officer's name is not clearly impressed in my memory ; I merely have the recollection that it had some resemblance to the French word ' pardon.' My notes refer to him only under the nickname ' Parrot Pasha,' which Lieutenant Seymour bestowed upon him for his volubility.

NOTE 31. PAGE 59.

Midhat Pasha became Grand Vizier on December 16, 1876, and was sentenced to death for supposed high treason, whilst I was in Constantinople, on February 5, 1877. He was subsequently pardoned and exiled, and went to England; British influence being brought to bear upon the Sultan, he was recalled, held various high offices, and was again sentenced to death, in 1881, for a supposed share in the assassination of Sultan Abdul Aziz. The sentence was commuted to exile to Arabia, where he succumbed to privation in 1884. Time has vindicated his character, and he is now looked upon as one of the ablest and most honourable men whom the Porte has ever had in her service. Midhat was particularly eager and active in the attempted construction of railways, but was hampered, bound, and gagged at every step. If the reader will refer to Note 12, he will find that the fate of Mahmoud Damad Pasha and that of Midhat Pasha were almost identical, and yet the one was a charlatan, and the other a patriot!

NOTE 32. PAGE 60.

The five roads referred to are the following: 1, *Via* Nish to Belgrad; 2, by the Ghintzi Pass, *via* Berkovitza, to Lom Palankah; 3, by the Baba Konak Pass, *via* Orkanyé, to Plevna; 4, to Philippopolis by a partly forked route—*a. via* Ikhtinan to Tatar Bazardjik, *b. via* Samakov, Banya, and Bellova to Tatar Bazardjik; 5, *via* Küstendil and Istib to Saloniki.

NOTE 33. PAGE 62.

'Palankah' is a fortress; Lom is the name of a river which must not be confounded with the two rivers of the same name, Black and White Lom, in East Bulgaria, near which the Czarevitch was subsequently defeated in several minor engagements by Mehemed Ali Pasha.

NOTE 34. PAGE 62.

These were converted Mahomedans of Christian Bulgarian descent, and were called Pandokes; those of East Roumelia are called Pomakes. The Mahomedans of Christian descent in Bulgaria and East Roumelia numbered in 1877 half a million.

NOTE 35. PAGE 63.

Stieler's atlas gives a place, Hasanova; possibly the two are identical.

NOTE 36. PAGE 63.

It may have been the commander's original intention to leave us in Lom Palankah, which was garrisoned by part of Osman's army; of this I cannot speak with certainty. From Lom Palankah a bridle-path, practicable in moderately fair weather, led along the Danube to Artzar, which is connected with Widdin by a good road. Query, Why did not the infantry proceed by this path, which would have saved another ten miles? Was it because the path is in its entire length within view of the Roumanian shore? Later, in July, we travelled by the Artzar-Topolovatz footpath with artillery and baggage; but it was then in splendid condition, owing to two months' uninterrupted fine weather.

NOTE 37. CHAPTER IV. PAGE 67.

Sami Pasha was an officer remarkable chiefly for his violent opposition to German 'missions.' Kossuth himself came to Widdin in disguise, was recognised, arrested, and sent to Shumla, thence to Kutahia, in Asia Minor.

NOTE 38. PAGE 73.

Each captain is supposed to have a boluk emini (clerk), but ours had none; the orderly, a young private of fair education, served in his place, though the first-lieutenant kept the books.

NOTE 39. PAGE 73.

Each battalion is supposed to have a surgeon, a physician, and an apothecary; ours had only the first. Many battalions had none of these officials.

NOTE 40. PAGE 76.

Speaking of chess, I must mention a curious occurrence. We had in Widdin camp two sets of men manufactured in the way I have indicated, one painted white and red, the other green and red. Frequently I played with a lieutenant named Akbar; whenever we used the white and red men Akbar won, whilst he lost invariably with the green and red figures. I found out the reason. He was colour-blind!

NOTE 41. PAGE 77.

The date mark is an indentation of the skin of the size and shape of a date. It is, strange to say, most prevalent where dates are cultivated, for instance in the Persian Gulf districts. In Bassorah hardly a man, European or native, escapes this disfigurement.

NOTE 42. PAGE 80.

Ghazi, *i.e.* the Victorious, is a much-coveted military title. The Sultan conferred it upon Osman in September 1877.

NOTE 43. PAGE 83.

Abdul Kerim Pasha was born in 1807 (? 1811) in East Roumelia, and received military training in Vienna. He has distinguished himself in many campaigns, but is most noted, rightly and honourably so, as an organiser and reformer. In 1876 and 1877 he was incapable owing to old age and infirmity. He was recalled, and replaced by Mehemed Ali Pasha July 23, was tried by court-martial for not having prevented the Russians from crossing the Danube, and was exiled to Lemnos, afterwards to Rhodes. What became of him history does not record.

NOTE 44. PAGE 92.

The tobacco monopoly was introduced in Turkey in 1884, in Servia in 1885. In both countries the monopoly is farmed. If the reader has never smoked tobacco from the Servian district of Baina Bashta, he has not smoked good tobacco.

NOTE 45. PAGE 96.

The gipsies of Bulgaria are not nomadic, but are settled in the villages. During the rebellion of 1876 it was mostly gipsies who acted as hangmen. They are thievish, vicious, and dirty.

NOTE 46. PAGE 106.

This maize porridge is called mamaliga by the Bulgarians, and is a national dish. It is not unlike the Italian polenta. Maize is much cultivated in the province, where it thrives well. Honey is abundant in Bulgaria; the peasants preserve it, in order to have a supply all the year round. Among other sweets, we had delicious candied rose-leaves from the neighbourhood of Kazanlik, where roses are cultivated in fields, like potatoes, for the purpose of obtaining the otto of roses. Maize-fields, apiaries, rose-fields, orchards, and vineyards constitute the common wealth of the Bulgarian peasantry.

NOTE 47. PAGE 116.

Ghazi Ahmed Moukhtar Pasha was born in Brussa, Asia Minor, in 1832. From 1854 to 1865 he was teacher in the Mekteb Harbi. He was Serdar Ekrem 1871 in Yemen, and 1875 and 1876 in the Herzegovina. In July 1877 the Sultan conferred the title of Ghazi upon him for his victories at Elbar and Sevin, and for the relief of Kars.

NOTE 48. PAGE 117.

Augustus Charles Hobart was born in 1822, third son of the sixth Earl of Buckingham. He entered the British Navy 1835, became commander 1855, captain 1863. During the American Civil War he ran the blockade eighteen times. He entered the Turkish service 1867, and was successful in the Crete rebellion; 1870, he became admiral and founder of the powerful modern Ottoman Navy. In 1874 he went back to England, but re-entered Turkish service early in 1877, as Admiral-in-Chief. He died 1886.

NOTE 49. PAGE 118.

Suleiman Pasha was born in 1840, in Stamboul, of poor parents. He distinguished himself in Crete 1867, was director of the Erkiani Harb Mektebi 1874 and 1875, fought in Servia 1876, and was successful as Serdar Ekrem in the Herzegovina and Montenegro, April to June 1877. He practically annihilated his magnificent army in his audacious onslaughts on the Shipka Pass, August 21st to 26th. He replaced Mehemed Ali Pasha as Serdar Ekrem on October 2, whereupon the impetuous Hero of Shipka became a veritable Fabius Cunctator. After the war he was arraigned before a court-martial on a variety of charges. The Suleiman trial beats that of Bazaine, not only for scandalous partiality, but also for dramatic intensity. When some glaring lie of the prosecution had caused Suleiman to utter an exclamation which displeased the President, the latter ordered the soldiers to kill him; whereupon Suleiman presented his breast to the bayonets, crying out: 'Coward! That would be a soldier's death.' Even the Sultan got tired of the slowness of the tribunal, and after the trial had dragged on for eight months, he commanded judgment to be pronounced within twenty-four hours. Suleiman was found guilty of having failed to '*marcher au canon*' on specified occasions, and sentenced to fifteen years' incarceration. The Sultan pardoned him, and exiled him to Bagdad; subsequently he was allowed to return to Constantinople, where he died 1883. Faust Lurion, a Turkish Jew, has taken up his defence in the two volumes, '*Campagne de Suleyman Pacha*,' and '*Procès de Suleyman Pacha*.' In my opinion, Suleiman was as innocent of treacherous intent as Bazaine at Metz. If it is true, as it is asserted, that in his furious assaults on the Shipka Pass he acted on orders from above, even the uselessness of his heroism cannot be laid to his charge. A German under Suleiman's orders, Liman (Lehmann) Pasha, a personal friend of the author, deserves mention for his bravery. He was killed in one of the Shipka Pass actions, on September 11, 1877.

NOTE 50. CHAPTER V. PAGE 122.

I append our stages:—

	Miles.
Widdin—Artzar	15
Artzar—Krivodol	18
Krivodol—Vultchiderma	13
Vultchiderma—Altimir	24
Altimir—Keniéja	12
Keniéja—Mahulleta	8
Mahulleta—Gorna Netropolié	15
Gorna Netropolié—Plevna	<u>10</u>
	115

NOTE 51. PAGE 123.

Kazanlik, the centre of the rose-growing district, a paradise of indescribable beauty according to Moltke ('Briefe aus der Türkei'), was taken by the Russians on July 17, after a smart engagement.

NOTE 52. PAGE 124.

General Nepokoitchizki, Chief-of-Staff to the Grand Duke Nicholas, was said to have croaked so frequently and dismally about Plevna in April, May, and June as to incur the Czar's displeasure.

NOTE 53. PAGE 128.

Both Osman Pasha and Hassan Hairi Pasha had repeatedly warned the authorities at home that Nikopoli had become untenable; that it would be wise to evacuate it, and thus save its garrison, artillery, and stores. The Council of War had consented to this proposal a day too late. A leading feature of the Turkish wirepullers' dispositions throughout the campaign was: 'Just too late.'

NOTE 54. PAGE 128.

I was told that Osman, before leaving Widdin, had been assured from Constantinople that a bridge had been, or would be, constructed for the passage of his army.

NOTE 55. PAGE 130.

I flatly contradict the Russian and other writers who assert that the Vid bridge was fortified. There were no fortifications of any kind; but some rough earthworks were constructed by the battalion which had the guard of the bridge during the battle of July 30. The distance from bridge to town is four miles. I have already said that we met the Rahova road

in Gorna Netropolié; this road joins the Orkanyé road a quarter of a mile west of the bridge.

NOTE 56. PAGE 132.

Artzar had some claim to be considered a town, being fortified; hence it was sometimes called Artzar Palankah by the Turks.

NOTE 57. PAGE 133.

The military title kaim-makam (lieutenant-colonel) is given to the civil governor of a district or town. Konak means large house, official building, hotel.

NOTE 58. PAGE 134.

The fortified stone convent in the east, the blockhouse in the west, the fortified Vid bridge, and other things mentioned by Russian, German, and French writers, are fables.

NOTE 59. PAGE 135.

This is not the road by which we had come. We met it in Gorna Netropolié. The actual distance between Widdin and Plevna is 115 miles, the difference being due to the bend of the Danube between Calafat and Lom Palankah.

NOTE 60. PAGE 136.

Gorna (gornyi) is Bulgarian for upper, Turkish yokara; Dolna (dolnyi), lower, Turkish ashaga. The geographical nomenclature of Bulgaria is puzzling; many places have four or five names (nearly all at least two), each admitting of a dozen spellings. I have seen 'Türstenik' spelt in twenty-seven ways, 'Tatar Bazardjik' in eighty!

NOTE 61. PAGE 137.

The Russian writer and eyewitness, Kuropatkin (who is otherwise distinguished by an attempt at honourable impartiality, though frequently grossly misinformed as to the strength of the Turkish forces), makes a Turkish deserter say, in October, in substance: 'There are some officers in the Turkish camp who have never fought, and will be found useless under fire, for instance, Adil Pasha.' Surely this is a mistake, or else the deserter wilfully misled the Russians. Adil Pasha, apart from previous wars, was under fire from the first battle till the last; he had an excellent reputation in camp; the Mushir had unbounded confidence in him; and I can bear testimony to his courage. I think the honour due to a brave enemy should induce General Kuropatkin to erase Adil's name in future editions.

NOTE 62. CHAPTER VI. PAGE 148.

This ravine commences east of Grivitzza, runs in a north-westerly direction, is ten miles long, and opens near Ribina into the Vid Valley. During wet seasons it contains a brook; in dry seasons, only the last two miles have water.

NOTE 63. PAGE 157.

The Chief-of-Staff, Tahir Pasha, had taken the command after Husni Bey had been wounded. The aide-de-camp, Talahat Bey, assisted in re-organising the defeated troops. Colonel Said Bey led the two reserve battalions.

NOTE 64. CHAPTER VII. PAGE 165.

Boluk emini = assistant clerk. There is, or ought to be, one of these officials to every company, as the name implies (boluk = company); but ours had none, so the first-lieutenant kept the books and the 'cash.' There never was much cash, and the salaries were mostly paid in 'scrip,' perfectly useless to me, as it could be employed only in the payment of taxes. I lost these precious documents in the final catastrophe.

NOTE 65. PAGE 169.

Mehemed Ali Pasha was a German, hailing from Brandenburg, Karl Detroit being his name. He was born in 1827. His record, up to 1877, was an honourable and distinguished one. I shall have to say bitter things about him; in doing so I repeat that which was at the time the opinion of the Plevna army. Our views may have been one-sided and exaggerated, perhaps unfounded—we judged causes from effects; but I consider it my duty to echo the sentiments of Osman's officers. He was replaced by Suleiman Pasha as Serdar Ekrem on October 2, and was sent to Sofia, to organise an army for the relief of Plevna. After the fall of Sofia he was called to the capital, to prepare it for defence. He was one of the negotiators for armistice and peace; later, representative of the Porte at the Berlin Congress; in September 1878 he was killed by rebels in Albania.

NOTE 66. PAGE 177.

Some authors style these redoubts 'Abdul Kerim Tabiyas,' pretending that this is the Turkish denomination. I cannot remember that the term originated with us. We had no reason to think well of Abdul Kerim Pasha, our late Commander-in-Chief, and it is not likely that we should have named one of our principal defences after him. The same remark applies to the 'Green Hill' south of Plevna. I never heard this hill called 'Yeshil Bair.' I shall, however, borrow this name from the Russian authors, for want of a better one.

NOTE 67. PAGE 179.

On July 20 we had fifty-eight guns. If we add six received from Sofia, and deduct six sent to Lovdcha and one demolished, a total of fifty-seven is left.

NOTE 68. CHAPTER VIII. PAGE 188.

Speaking from memory, I should estimate the distances from redoubt to third trench at 300 yards, to ravine at 400 yards, to first trench at 500 yards.

NOTE 69. PAGE 189.

Such an attempt at circumvention would not have succeeded. The three and a half centre batteries commanded this space; the garrisons of the Bukova redoubts, the reserves of our redoubt and that adjoining us, and half a dozen battalions from the general reserve, would have been thrown into the gap at this stage of the battle. This I learnt afterwards. But every Turkish officer to whom I mentioned the matter confirmed my opinion; *i.e.*, he would have made the attempt, had he been a Russian leader.

NOTE 70. PAGE 191.

This was the Regiment Pensa. It was not again in a fighting condition for the rest of the day. Its losses are recorded as 1,050 men out of 2,500.

NOTE 71. PAGE 192.

The companies D and *t* and two squadrons of regulars; also two companies from the redoubt on our right.

NOTE 72. PAGE 193.

The major referred, undoubtedly, to the battle of Giurgevo, July 7, 1854, and to the words which Kinglake puts into the mouth of the Czar Nicholas.

NOTE 73. PAGE 193.

There were four bridges across the Grivitza: firstly—starting from the west—that on the Plevna-Bukova road; secondly, that on the Nikopoli road—these two on the northern margin of Plevna; thirdly, that on the Bulgareni road, halfway between Plevna and Grivitza; fourthly, one in Grivitza.

NOTE 74. PAGE 195.

I recorded these and other particulars in my Diary, and worked matters out in detail during the many leisure hours between this battle and the September assault. My documents were lost on December 10, but I

re-wrote much from memory, assisted by fellow-prisoners, during my Russian captivity.

NOTE 75. CHAPTER IX. PAGE 215.

The Roumanians built a bridge near Corabia (to be exact, between Selistoaré on the left and Tépékini, *alias* Magula, on the right bank, utilising an island between these two places), and passed here, with two divisions, between August 27 and September 1; a third division had crossed already, on August 7, at Nikopoli, by boats; the fourth remained in and near Calafat. These four divisions constituted the Roumanian Army. It had been Prince Charles's intention to make straight for Plevna and assume the offensive; but General Sotow, who then commanded the Russian West Army (as that operating against Plevna was called), insisted upon the two Roumanian divisions marching eastward along the Danube as far as the Vid mouth, to keep in touch with the extreme right of the Russian position and thence southward to Kreta and Brezlianitza. The removal of the stores and train from the Corabia bridge to the Vid caused grave inconvenience, and for a week the Roumanian troops were badly off. For this reason, and others, Kuropatkin considered Sotow's disposition a blunder. The Turks did not oppose the Roumanian bridge-building, although in August they had still two battalions in Beshti and three in Rahöva, and several monitors on the Upper Danube. I presume the Beshti battalions retreated to Rahova, although I have no information on this point. In September the bridge was removed from Corabia, and rebuilt between Turnu Magurele and Nikopoli. In the beginning of September Prince Charles took nominally the supreme command of the united Russian and Roumanian West Army, and Sotow became his Chief-of-Staff. In reality, the Prince never commanded any but his own troops, and Sotow acted independently. Kuropatkin is severe upon this splitting of the command, and attributes to it the failure of the September assault. In this battle things were really worse. The Czar and the Grand Duke Nicholas were also present, and there were thus four supreme commanders, although—it is asserted—the Czar and the Grand Duke were mere onlookers, and never interfered. It must have been particularly gratifying to these 'onlookers' to see their 100,000 men with 444 guns defeated by 30,000 men with seventy-two guns! In October, General Todleben, the Hero of Sebastopol, became a fifth chief.

NOTE 76. PAGE 216.

These medical men had been on the way from Orkanyé to Plevna, and were captured by a Cossack detachment. Our ambulances displayed a flag showing a Red Crescent on a white field.

NOTE 77. PAGE 221.

This regiment of ten squadrons (eighty men each) of Saloniki auxiliary cavalry had joined us one or two days previously; also, a squadron of regulars had arrived.

NOTE 78. PAGE 222.

In quoting Kuropatkin, I do so from Krahmer's German translation, as I am not acquainted with the Russian language.

NOTE 79. PAGE 225.

I beg leave to quote Kuropatkin in literal translation : 'The battle of Lovdcha showed how much more effective the long-range guns of the Turkish artillery were than those of the Russian. Ninety-two Russian guns were unable, until nearly the end of the battle, to silence five guns. The impossibility of answering the Turkish fire successfully had, morally, a very disadvantageous influence upon the Russian troops, inasmuch as it deprived not only the infantry, but also the artillery itself, of confidence in its own guns.'

NOTE 80. PAGE 225.

I happened to be present when a lieutenant-colonel (I think it was Mehemed Nazif Bey) who had taken part in the expedition gave my major an account of this council. The following is, as far as I can remember, the substance of his statement :—

'It was in the early morning, rather chilly, and the sky was overcast. We were on the slope of a hill facing south-east towards Lovdcha. We squatted on the ground, forming a circle around the Mushir, who sat on a camp-stool with a map on his knee. The following were present : Pashas Hassan Sabri, Emin, Ahmed, Tahir ; Colonels Omer and Tewfik ; Lieut.-Colonels Abdullah, Raif, Hairy, Ibrahim, and two or three others. The Mushir asked : " Shall we fight, or not ? " and briefly gave the pros and cons. We deliberated among ourselves for a few minutes. Hassan Sabri rose, and said that he engaged himself to storm and take Lovdcha at a cost of 1,200 to 1,500 men. Tahir said : " Granted we take Lovdcha, is our army sufficiently strong to occupy and *hold* both Plevna and Lovdcha ? " The Mushir reflected, and said, " This is a grave and sensible objection. To occupy Lovdcha with eight battalions and a battery, as before, would mean simply to sacrifice these. An entire division of twelve battalions and four batteries is the smallest force that can successfully hold Lovdcha ; in addition, a strong body of cavalry is required to maintain the communication with Plevna. For storming purposes I can send for four more battalions to Plevna ; that is the utmost I can do." The question was put : " Are we sufficiently strong to hold both Lovdcha and Plevna ? " Hassan Sabri said Yes ; everybody else said No ; the Mushir did not vote. The original question was then put, and negatived unanimously ; the Mushir and Hassan Sabri did not vote. The order to prepare for the march back was at once given.'

For some unexplained reason the return journey was not commenced until early next day (September 5).

NOTE 81. PAGE 226.

To wit, seven squadrons of regulars, two squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks, ten squadrons of Saloniki auxiliaries.

NOTE 82. PAGE 230.

Krishin, Opanetz, Bukova, and Grivitza were outside our positions, and never did, at any time, form part of the fortified camp of Plevna. The reason of this is that the inhabitants of these villages were exclusively Bulgarian, and that their possession would have done more harm than good. Except Plevna, there was no town or village inside the camp.

NOTE 83. PAGE 231.

In the second battle there was a gap half a mile wide and denuded of troops between the Janik Bair redoubts and the Bukova redoubts; this defect had been remedied by means of the trenches mentioned.

NOTE 84. PAGE 231.

These are the redoubts called Grivitza Nos. 1 and 2 by the Russians. The south redoubt (No. 1) was taken by the Roumanians on September 11, and was never recovered. The Turkish troops christened it *Kanlı Tabiya*, i.e. the Bloody Battery.

NOTE 85. PAGE 231.

I shall call these four redoubts collectively the Krishin redoubts, the two others (Issa and Kavanlik) the Plevna redoubts; the Russian writers call the latter two the 'Skobeleff Redoubts.' These six redoubts had been built immediately after the second battle, to protect the army's march from Plevna to Orkanyé; for it was Osman's intention—well known in camp—to evacuate the former and make the latter his centre of operations. Peremptory orders from the Council of War bound him to Plevna. *Baghlarbashi* means 'head (summit) of the vineyards'; this is the redoubt which the Russians call 'Garden Redoubt.'

NOTE 86. PAGE 233.

I have quoted Western time throughout. It is hardly needful to mention that throughout the volume my indications of time are more or less guesswork.

NOTE 87. CHAPTER X. PAGE 239.

Eight battalions under Emin Pasha, who was wounded next day.

NOTE 88. PAGE 240.

The enemy's losses during the four days were 2,000.

NOTE 89. PAGE 243.

The maize had not yet been cut, but many of the fields of it around Plevna had been destroyed by the tramp of troops. Where it was still intact, for instance near Radishevo, the corn stood five to six feet high.

NOTE 90. PAGE 243.

The attack on Omer Tabiya was made by seven regiments, which lost 5,400 men. Thus, seven regiments (twenty-one battalions) were wrecked by a few battalions. Such is the value of fighting from covered positions, however roughly made, granted, of course, that they are held by troops like the Turkish infantry, which, when acting on the defensive, is the most formidable in Europe. Kuropatkin attributes this disastrous failure to the fact that two regiments started by mistake two hours before the appointed time. These (Ugla and Yaroslav) lost 2,300 men out of 5,000. Thilo von Trotha (a German author writing from the Russian point of view, whom I have had occasion to quote before) is very severe upon the commander of this division, General Schnitnikoff, who allowed two regiments to be massacred during two hours without sending aid; as if two regiments could have taken the Turkish camp. This blunder would seem incredible were it not confirmed by the Russian writers. Its worst consequence was the lowering of the *morale* in the Russian army. At 5 p.m. on the 11th, two hours after the appointed commencement of the attack, Sotow already considered the battle as lost, and contemplated a general retreat. The success of Skobelev and the Roumanians in the evening did not affect his decision. Osman, on the evening of the 11th, also regarded the action as lost, with better reason. Thus the strange thing happened that the two opposing commanders, unknown to each other, both considered themselves beaten. A battle may be undecided, but the opposing forces cannot both be defeated. Who was right? He was the victor who made the last and supreme attempt, namely, Osman. Ergo, Never give up a cause as lost until you have exhausted all your resources.

NOTE 91. PAGE 252.

Major Issa, the commander of the redoubt bearing his name, was grievously wounded, and died a few days later.

NOTE 92. PAGE 256.

The brooks in the vicinity of Plevna, in fact the waterways throughout Western Bulgaria, are subject to changes; hence the fact that no two maps are alike with respect to the watercourses. Where in rainy weather there is a river with a strong current, the usual July drought leaves but a lazy gutter, sometimes only a dry bed. The brook in question was twenty feet wide after the September deluge of the year 1877; two months before there had been but a thin streamlet, like that from a leaking pipe. Often

the brooks alter their courses between one season and another, so that a map which was correct in one year would fail the traveller twelve months afterwards.

NOTE 93. PAGE 257.

Latrines had been constructed in or near all redoubts, but it was difficult to accustom the men to using them; somehow they preferred the open fields. Moreover, Baghlarbashi had been built to accommodate 500 men, and held then 1,700.

NOTE 94. PAGE 259.

Kuropatkin's account is as follows:—During the 12th Skobelev sent repeatedly to Sotow urgent appeals for help, to which Sotow replied: 'I can send no troops, because I have none to spare; the battle is lost, and you must retreat.' At last, in the afternoon, Krylow, on his own responsibility, contrary to orders, and as a matter of *camaraderie*, ordered the despatch of six battalions; three had already started when Sotow galloped up and stopped the other three. All the time Sotow had seventy-four battalions idle, of which forty-one (seventeen Russian and twenty-four Roumanian) had not fought yet. The defeat in the centre on the previous day, of which Sotow had been an eyewitness, had disheartened him. Kuropatkin characterises the Russian leaders' ignorance of their forces and their inability to handle them as 'infamous' ('schmählich' in Kraemer's German translation). Think of that!—when Osman threw his last two battalions into the scale for life and death, *and won*, Sotow, if Kuropatkin be correct, had seventy-one battalions idle—half as much again as the entire Turkish force,—but was so utterly cowed as to be unable, or unwilling, to utilise them, *and was beaten*! I cannot presume to question General Kuropatkin's statements, who, then a captain, was with Skobelev throughout the battle; but would it not have been fairer not to attribute the Turkish victory entirely to Russian blunders? Why not confess, frankly and honourably, that at least a fraction of the credit is due to the superior science, indomitable energy, and *unshaken morale* of the Turkish leader; to the superhuman efforts of the officers, particularly as regards the gathering and re-formation of disbanded troops; and to the stupendous bravery of the soldiers? Skobelev paid no heed to Sotow's instructions; he retreated only after the conquered redoubts had been recovered by the Turks. It is characteristic that Sotow did not count the possession of Kanli Tabiya as a success. This redoubt, which had cost the Russians 1,300, the Roumanians 2,600, the Turks 500 men, was completely overlooked and controlled by Bash Tabiya, which stood on a higher level. Osman wisely recognised that its loss was no disadvantage to the Turks, its possession no gain to the enemy, and subsequently no effort was made up to the end to recover it, save the abortive attempt on the evening of the 12th, which was undertaken by Adil Pasha on his own responsibility.

NOTE 95. PAGE 260.

The Turkish wounded in Kanli Tabiya had succumbed to the Russian and Roumanian bayonets.

NOTE 96. PAGE 263.

Later I reported this man for various brutalities ; but he was let off with a reprimand, as it was rightly concluded that we all had been more or less out of our senses.

NOTE 97. PAGE 269.

That the possession of the Grivitza redoubt No. 1 was no advantage to the Russians is admitted by the critics and the Russian authors ; it was not only no advantage, but a positive disadvantage, because during the subsequent investment the hostile lines were brought into a proximity (300 yards between the redoubts, 100 yards between the trenches, sometimes only thirty yards between the sentries) which constituted a permanent danger to safety and caused useless bloodshed, and the risk of demoralising the troops by that friendly intercourse between the common soldiers of the opposing sides which invariably takes place in such cases. (The outposts used to talk to each other, amuse one another with songs and antics, exchange biscuits, tobacco, and other commodities, and so forth. It goes without saying that I apply the word 'demoralise' in a purely military sense. From a commonplace point of view, men who conceive feelings of friendliness and brotherhood for men of another nation can hardly be said to have become 'demoralised'!) True, these disadvantages were reciprocal ; but it is clear that they must have been graver to the besiegers, who played a winning, than to the besieged, who played a losing game. Had Kanli Tabiya not formed part of the Russian lines, the investment would have been none the less complete, the bloodshed smaller, the result in the end the same. Without Bash Tabiya (Grivitza redoubt No. 2) Kanli Tabiya was of no importance. The two together were of immense value ; this induced the Roumanians to make repeated onslaughts on Bash Tabiya, occasioning a loss of life which might have been avoided had the Russians evacuated Kanli Tabiya ; not to mention the fact that the latter, necessarily crowded, was the focus of the concentrated artillery-fire of the Turks. During and after the battle the headquarters of the Czar and the Grand Duke Nicholas were in Porodim. They observed the conflict, the latter from a hill two miles south of Grivitza and two miles east of Radishevo, called by the Russians 'Grand Duke Hill,' the former from one two miles south-east of Grivitza, and two miles north east of the other hill, called by the Russians 'Czar Hill.' It is characteristic that Sotow contemplated on September 13 a general retreat of the Russian army beyond the Osma, with Bulgareni as central point ; but Nicholas forbade the execution of this plan, and laid down the line Bogot-Radishevo-

Grivtza-Verbitza as the Russian-Roumanian front, with cavalry west of Plevna.

NOTE 98. PAGE 270.

General Loschkareff, with four Russian and four Roumanian regiments (thirty-four squadrons) and eighteen light guns, on the left Vid bank; General Leontieff, with four Russian regiments (twenty-six squadrons) and eighteen light guns, on the extreme left flank of the Russian position.

NOTE 99. PAGE 272.

Namely, four battalions belonging to Yunuz, one sent as reinforcement, two formed of stragglers of Emin's and Rifa'at's disbanded troops.

NOTE 100. PAGE 275.

We had at that time 1,500 carts in Plevna camp; but with so extended a battle-field even this number was totally inadequate to convey the wounded to town and the dead to the places appointed for burial.

NOTE 101. PAGE 281.

Solferino 40,000, Gravelotte 32,000, Koeniggrätz 29,000, Plevna 25,000.

NOTE 102. CHAPTER XI. PAGE 295.

It is necessary here to give a *résumé* of the activity of the Russian-Roumanian cavalry in rear of the Turkish Plevna army from the day on which it crossed the Vid (September 8) to the day on which its activity on the left Vid bank came virtually to an end (October 7). Trotha and Kuropatkin are my authorities.

General Loschkareff, the commander up to September 19, had at his disposal eight regiments and eighteen guns, which were concentrated on the evening of September 7 at Ribina.

September 8.—Vid crossed; corps reaches Túrstenik. Dolna Netropolié, Gorna Netropolié, and Dolna Dubnik occupied. Skirmish with troops sent by Suleiman Bey from the Opanetz redoubts.

September 9.—Desultory fighting with troops from Opanetz and the Vid bridge.

September 10.—The cavalry division (four regiments and eighteen guns) of General Leontieff, belonging to the left wing of the Russian army, crosses Vid at Medeven.

September 11 (first day of the third battle).—Communication established between the two corps, and Orkanyé road occupied from Gorna Dubnik to vicinity of Vid bridge.

September 12 to 18.—The cavalry remains in the quarter-circle, Dolna Netropolié-Dolna Dubnik-Medeven.

September 19.—General Krylow succeeds General Loschkareff as commander; his force is brought up to seventeen regiments and forty-two

guns. Loschkareff, with four regiments, occupies space between Orkanyé road and Russian left wing; Leontieff, with four regiments, is in Bogot, to protect Russian left flank.

September 20.—A detachment (fourteen squadrons and six guns) under Colonel Tutolmin reaches neighbourhood of Telish.

September 21.—Tutolmin attacks the Turks (Ahmed Hifzi's column) in Telish, and is driven off.

September 22.—Renewed and unsuccessful attack on the part of Tutolmin, who starts from Telish, and meets near Gorna Dubnik Krylow with the main body. The latter attacks, and is beaten off. A detachment of his in Dolna Dubnik is dislodged by troops sent from Plevna (Atouf's column). Both places are occupied by the Turks.

September 23.—Krylow, in danger of being taken between two fires, retreats hastily to Türstenik. He leaves a brigade and a battery near Dolna Netropolié. The Turkish column (Ahmed Hifzi's) advances to Dolna Dubnik, and joins hands here with the troops (Atouf's) sent from Plevna to meet it.

September 24.—The Turkish column, with its enormous and cumbersome train, reaches Plevna in safety, after having exchanged shots with the detachment left behind by Krylow.

Was there ever such a curious game of chess as that played between Krylow's cavalry on the one hand, and the detachments of Ahmed Hifzi and Atouf on the other ?

September 25.—Krylow makes an excursion to Rahova, and cuts the Widdin-Plevna wire.

September 26.—He sends a few shells into the town; the fire being vigorously returned, he retreats, and reports that he 'did not like to do damage to the town, as it contained so many Christian inhabitants.'

September 27 to 29.—The corps goes to Ribina for forage, thence (September 30) to Türstenik.

In the meantime the detachment left behind by Krylow in Dolna Netropolié (eight squadrons and six guns), under Colonel Levis, has captured a few trains of supplies sent to Plevna from Orkanyé, with 100 carts of flour, 500 head of cattle, and (what was worse for the Turks, as they were already short of these articles) a stock of salt and quinine.

October 1.—Sharp encounter in the vicinity of Dolna Netropolié, whither Krylow had gone by orders from headquarters. He is beaten off, and retreats once more to Türstenik, whilst the Turks occupy both Netropoliés (which they evacuated voluntarily a week later).

October 2.—Levis's detachment reaches Telish and Radomirtzi, destroys sundry bridges, and catches the Sofia-Plevna mail.

This mail carried a letter for me, which turned up miraculously in Kharkoff four months later, and was handed to me, after having been opened by the Russians, who got nothing for their trouble; for it contained only a mother's pious advice, and the news that the family canary had died.

October 3 to 5.—Levis in Radomirtzi; Krylow, with the main body, in and near Türstenik.

The task entrusted previously to twelve regiments (*viz.* to prevent troops and supplies from Orkanyé getting into Plevna) was now transferred to two regiments. 'But then, in the hands of so bold a commander as Colonel Levis, these two regiments did a lot in a few days' (*vide* Kuropatkin). Rough on poor Krylow!

October 6.—Levis, attacked in front (Chefket Pasha's column) and rear (van of troops sent from Plevna), effects his escape skilfully across the Isker to Chumakova.

October 7.—The Turks occupy now, and have fortified, both Dubniks, Telish, Radomirtzi, and Lukovitz, and the task set to Krylow's cavalry—namely, to cut off supplies and reinforcements from Plevna—has failed dismally. 8,000 horsemen, splendidly trained and equipped, anxious to fight, operating in a country favourable for cavalry, as that west and south-west of Plevna undoubtedly is, and occupied by a population three-fourths of whom were friendly, and kinsmen in language and religion, failed to intercept two columns, one of seventeen, one of twenty-one battalions, each hampered by a train ten to fifteen miles long.

From October 7 to 24 (when Gourko took command of this section of the Russian line) the Russians did nothing west of Plevna.

The reason for the feebleness of the Russian leaders' dispositions and performances is to be found in the fact that they (notably Loschkareff and Krylow) had been told to 'spare their men.' As if it were *not* always the sacred duty of every commander to 'spare his men!' Opposed to a brave and clever enemy, successes in warfare will never be obtained without bloodshed—never, as long as men carry arms. Fear of losses from the dreaded quickfire of the Turkish infantry induced Krylow to make no serious attempt to accomplish the task set to him by force of arms. Fear prompted him to resort to marches and counter-marches, manœuvres, and petty skirmishes, when only *actions* could have brought about the desired result. The days of cavalry attacks are not passed. In every campaign there occur instances where only cavalry can speak the decisive word; to lose such a psychological moment in order to 'spare the men' is nonsense. A human life has value only if it is sacrificed at the right moment. For an emperor to provoke and declare war, and then to instruct his generals to spare their men, is idiocy.

NOTE 103. PAGE 295.

Of the sixty-three battalions of infantry, twenty-five were Nizamié, thirty-six Redif, and two Mustafiz. The cavalry was composed as follows: thirteen squadrons of regulars, two squadrons of Ottoman Cossacks, ten squadrons of Saloniki auxiliaries. The artillery consisted of seven batteries of field-artillery (6 lb.), four batteries of horse-artillery (4 lb.), three

batteries of mountain artillery (3 lb.). The average strength of the battalions was 450 to 500 men, of the squadrons, eighty men; the artillery had 100 to 120 men to the battery, the engineers sixty men to the company.

NOTE 104. PAGE 297.

Of the twenty-one battalions, three were Nizamié, twelve Redif, five Mustafiz, one auxiliaries, *i.e.* composed of men not belonging to any of the three classes.

NOTE 105. PAGE 299.

I have estimated the losses from all causes between September 13 and October 8 at 2,000. I have stated the number of Circassians at 1,000, instead of 1,300, because some hundreds disbanded and dispersed before the investment. Of the eighty-four battalions infantry, twenty-eight were Nizamié, forty-eight Redif, seven Mustafiz, one auxiliaries. The battalion of the 'Volunteers of the Ottoman Union' (a patriotic movement recently inaugurated in all parts of the Sultan's dominions for the defence of the Empire) was composed for the greater part of men of the province. The squadron of mounted volunteers hailed from Vodéna. These volunteers, foot and mounted, served as guard and escort to headquarters. I have not included them in the infantry and cavalry, as they did not form part of any tactical formation.

NOTE 106. PAGE 299.

In Gorna Dubnik there were also a few companies of Zaptiés (Gendarmes). One of the battalions stationed here (Mustafiz) was composed of Zeibaks, an Asiatic tribe; these behaved splendidly when the place was stormed by the Russians on October 24.

NOTE 107. PAGE 299.

Strigel lies at the southern foot of a secondary pass bearing its name, unimportant on account of the proximity of the Baba Konak Pass, the best of all Balkan crossings, but which might have been used (though it never was) by the enemy as a means to circumvent the Baba Konak Pass.

NOTE 108. PAGE 299.

This is not the Demirküi seven miles north of Plevna, on the left Vid bank; the name (meaning Iron Village) is one of frequent occurrence. It was also called Demirküpi, *i.e.* Iron Bridge; I do not know which of the two names is the correct one.

NOTE 109. PAGE 300.

The well-known Englishman, Baker Pasha, commanded a brigade of the Baba Konak army.

NOTE 110. PAGE 301.

This part of my list is compiled from memory only, not from notes, books, or documents; I cannot, therefore, undertake to say that it is correct or complete. Most of these gentlemen had arrived in Plevna after the second, some after the third, battle. They were in the pay of the Ottoman Government, and were called 'Red Crescent' men, to distinguish them from the 'Red Cross' doctors, *i.e.* those sent out by charitable committees in Germany, England, and elsewhere. Of the latter we had none in Plevna, neither had we (so far as I know) any war-correspondents during the investment. The doctors whose names I have given were known in camp by Turkish nicknames; one was called 'Kizil Burun Bey,' *i.e.* 'Colonel Red Nose.' Surgeon Moore and assistants Harvey, Moriot, and Sendamore (of the Stafford House Committee), arrived in Plevna with Chefket's column on October 8, and tendered their services to Osman, who declined them, with the following characteristic message: 'If you wish to have a look at my batteries, and would like to see some really good fighting, stay, and we will make you comfortable; if you wish to attend to my wounded, return to Orkanyé or Sofia; that is where they are, and you will find there thousands of them.' The four gentlemen returned on October 9 with Chefket to Orkanyé, where they were undoubtedly very useful. Surgeons Ryan and Mackellar (of the same Committee) were also in Plevna for a day or two during October, and were likewise requested to return to Orkanyé. Osman had an aversion against foreign surgeons and war-correspondents, and resented interference on the part of foreign nations, particularly on the part of England, who had left her ally in the lurch.

NOTE 111. PAGE 301.

Doctor Ollis was taken prisoner when Gorna Dubnik was stormed by the Russians on October 24, and was—so we heard in camp early in November—shot by them after he had surrendered. That was what we learnt; whether it is true or not I cannot say. Altogether, the barbarous conduct of the Russians on this day can only be explained, though not justified, by their extreme irritation consequent upon Ahmed Hifzi's magnificent defence. I refer later to the burning of the wounded and the attempted execution of the officers who had surrendered.

NOTE 112. PAGE 311.

More preposterous than General Ganetzki's claim to pose as conqueror of Plevna is that set up by some Roumanians on behalf of their Colonel Tcherkes, for no reason, that I can discover, except that he was the first to visit the wounded Osman in the shed near the Vid bridge, after the white flag had been hoisted.

NOTE 113. PAGE 312.

I have not been able to ascertain whether Prince Charles, and General Tchernat, the Roumanian commander, agreed with Todleben or were opposed to his plans. The truth is, I presume, that their opinions were not asked for. The relations between the Russian and Roumanian leaders and officers were far from friendly, and grew worse as time went on. In fact, early in 1878, after the armistice, it looked much like an outbreak of hostilities between the two countries, whilst the relations between Roumania and Turkey became quite cordial; so says the Belgian officer and writer, Fisch, the chronicler of the deeds of the Roumanian Army. Kuropatkin also mentions the strained relations between the Russians and Roumanians, and reads his countrymen a pertinent and sensible lecture on the subject. Early in November a Roumanian deserter reported in my hearing that the Russian and Roumanian soldiers frequently came to blows, and that both officers and men of the two nationalities hated each other cordially. He characterised the behaviour of the Russian officers as 'unbearable,' that of the men as 'brutal.' According to various accounts in contemporaries, the conduct of the Russians in Roumania was like that of barbarians in a *conquered* country. It is characteristic that the friendly intercourse which I have mentioned as taking place between the Turkish and Roumanian soldiers in the neighbourhood of Bash and Kanli Tabiyas ceased the moment the Russians relieved the Roumanians as garrison of Kanli Tabiya. The general impression in Plevna camp was that the Roumanians regretted bitterly having taken Russia's part, and that the nation was conscious of having no manner of complaint against Turkey.

NOTE 114. PAGE 313.

It was strange that Gourko, who succeeded so brilliantly in a task in which Krylow had failed so dismally, should have been appointed to the post at the latter's suggestion (*vide* Kuropatkin). What became of Krylow I know not; he must have retired from the seat of war, for his name is not mentioned again.

NOTE 115. PAGE 318.

I cannot remember whether we heard of the battle of the Aladja Dagh before October 24 or after, through the newspapers (mostly English) which the Russian generals were courteous enough to send us occasionally. Possibly the news came on October 31, with the four or five Turkish soldiers taken prisoner in Gorna Dubnik and Telish whom Gourko liberated for the purpose of acquainting Osman with the fall of these places.

NOTE 116. CHAPTER XII. PAGE 321.

Owing to the terrific losses which the troops of the centre had suffered in the September battle, the number of battalions in the Fourth and Ninth Corps had been reduced to two, and even one, per regiment.

NOTE 117. PAGE 322.

Whether Gourko was under Todleben's command, or independent of him, was then, and is now, a moot point. Gourko pretended that the latter was the case, and acted accordingly; Todleben, with some irritation, and a good deal of reason, claimed supreme command of the West Army. This state of things led to differences which it required all the tact of Imeretinski, Nepokoitchizki, and others, to smooth over. Gourko, with his impetuosity and corresponding disdain for Todleben's slow methods, and the latter, in his stolid resignation to a necessary evil, *i.e.* the investment—the one with his fine contempt for human life, the other in his unshakeable resolution not to sacrifice another soldier—were an exceedingly ill-matched pair. Both were splendid men, nevertheless, and stand out head and shoulders above the average run of the Russian leaders, Skobeleff alone excepted.

NOTE 118. PAGE 322.

The number 571 includes twenty heavy siege guns in the centre and ten in various other parts. The eighty-four light guns of the horse and Cossack artillery are also included.

NOTE 119. PAGE 325.

The siege of Widdin does not belong to the scope of this work; but being interested in the fate of this town, I collected much material, the greater part of which has never been published before, and hope to address my readers on this subject in a future volume. I shall here only mention that it was an affair creditable to both sides. The Turks behaved splendidly and showed themselves in the best light. Probably the town would have remained unconquered; in any case, it would have held out for weeks longer, had not the armistice put an end to the operations. In accordance with the terms of the latter, the Roumanians occupied the place, and the Turks retreated with arms, baggage, and full honours of war, to Biélogradchik. Before the opposing forces parted company there was a significant exchange of civilities, the relations between Russia and her ally having meanwhile become extremely strained. The Ottoman soldiers paraded before the Roumanian general, and the latter's troops before the Pasha; the leaders and officers entertained each other, and the Roumanians cheered and presented arms as their late opponents marched off. In connection with

the splendid behaviour of the troops of Widdin I must mention the equally fine conduct of the weak garrisons who defended the frontier against Servia. From the moment that Milan crossed the boundary (December 14) in order to share in the spoil gained by the Russian and Roumanian soldiers, he had to fight his way inch by inch, notwithstanding his enormous numerical superiority. Step by step the Turks defended their soil against this fresh invader with wonderful obstinacy. The garrisons left by Suleiman Pasha on the Montenegrin frontier are also deserving of praise on the same score. Altogether, the minor actions in the West towards the end of the war show the Turkish soldier to the best advantage; and in estimating his conduct we must not forget that these engagements were fought after Plevna had fallen—that is, after the country had received what was intended to be, and bade fair to be, its death-blow. I doubt whether there is anywhere in history a finer display of vitality, patriotism, and dogged perseverance under similar circumstances.

NOTE 120. PAGE 337.

There must have been a certain sum within the space surrounded by the Russian lines—say £T200,000, or £T4 per person—which can have neither increased nor diminished by a single piastre during the investment. Yet money grew scarcer and scarcer, and was almost entirely absent in December. I can explain this only by the theory that there are in every community and under all circumstances persons who will hoard money, although unable and unwilling to exchange it for commodities. I know of one example: an officer who made £T80 (of which the Russians subsequently robbed him) by the sale of articles belonging to himself. He sold a set of flannel under-garments for £T10.

NOTE 121. CHAPTER XIII. PAGE 364.

In the *ordre du jour* I have substituted for the long-winded designations of battalions given in the original document (for instance, 'Third Battalion Nizamié of the Second Regiment of the Fourth Army,' or 'Second Battalion of Redifs of Silistria of the First Ban') the running numbers introduced by me in the *ordre de bataille*, without individualising the battalions. I have given Western time. The terms 'bridge' and 'bridge-head' refer always to the old stone bridge. The auxiliary bridges constructed shortly before are called the Opanetz bridge and the southern, wooden bridge respectively. It must be remembered that the order was issued on the 7th, with the actual date of execution left open. I may mention that the instructions given in the *ordre du jour* that two battalions of the Fifth Brigade should be on the left bank of the Vid at the commencement of the action was not carried out—I do not know whether by accident or design. The whole of the Second Division, except my battalion and another from the Eleventh Regiment, was on the right bank throughout the battle.

NOTE 122. PAGE 368.

The total train consisted of 5,000 packhorses and 1,100 vehicles, including that portion which marched with the battalions. The train proper—that is, that part which accompanied the Convoy Brigade—consisted of 3,500 horses and 1,000 carts. All honour is due to its commander, Colonel Said Bey, for the fact that this cumbersome procession executed its movements in perfect order.

NOTE 123. CHAPTER XIV. PAGE 392.

At that moment Edhem Pasha, who commanded in Opanetz, had already surrendered, having been deceived by a contemptible ruse employed by the Roumanians, who, in summoning him to lay down his arms, had told him that Osman had hoisted the white flag. As a matter of fact, Osman surrendered at least two hours later than Edhem.

NOTE 124. CHAPTER XV. PAGE 401.

I have given this name phonetically, not knowing how it is spelt.

NOTE 125. PAGE 407.

Kuropatkin states that after September 11 the loss from illness to the Russian infantry was 200 men per day, which, adding 10 per cent. for cavalry, artillery, train, and staffs, would mean 20,000 men for the three months, of which number a large proportion must have succumbed; for it is clear that only the grave cases were sent away, men merely indisposed remaining in camp.

NOTE 126. PAGE 409.

The defence of Erzerum, as an episode of military history, is hardly known to the world, yet, in its way, it was a fine performance.

NOTE 127. PAGE 409.

Monkhtar Pasha was called to Europe in January, and entrusted with the defence of the capital. I do not know how he managed to escape out of invested Erzerum.

NOTE 128. ORDRES DE BATAILLE, &c. PAGE 422.

The Fourth Brigade was intended to be composed later of the ten battalions stationed in Nikopoli; but these surrendered on July 16.

NOTE 129. PAGE 422.

Osman's battalions numbered an average of 550. The squadrons were eighty strong. The artillery had only two ammunition carts per battery. We had no separate train companies, and carried no tents.

NOTE 130. PAGE 428.

Ahmed Pasha had been promoted to mirliva rank after the battle of July 30. I was told that he was English by birth; but I never had an opportunity of speaking to him, and cannot say whether this is true.

Reports that this or that officer who had distinguished himself and made his name known was a European in disguise were very frequent at that time; but most of them were newspaper-canards; I may mention as a case in point the absurd statement which appeared in contemporaries that Osman Pasha was Bazaine in disguise. It was most unfair to attempt to take away from the Turks the credit of having brave and clever men of their own nationality in their country's service.

NOTE 131. PAGE 430.

Ahmed Hifzi Pasha had meanwhile recovered in Sofia from the wound received on July 20, had been promoted to ferik rank, and had been given the command of the strong reinforcement column concentrating in Orkanyé. The latter was confidently expected by the troops in camp to reach Plevna before the battle; but it did not start until September 18, and arrived on the 24th. Chefket Pasha, with his stationary garrisons of Orkanyé, Sofia, Etropol, Kormatzi, and Tashkessen, had been placed under Osman's orders after the second battle. Kormatzi and Tashkessen are situated at the southern outlet of the Baba Konak Pass.

NOTE 132. PAGE 433.

Of the seventeen battalions, two were Nizamié, thirteen Redif, and two Mustafiz.

NOTE 133. PAGE 433.

Owing to the frequency of such names as Mehemed, Ali, &c., and to the absence, or, in any case, the non-use of distinguishing family names, the officers were habitually nicknamed, as 'black' and 'white'; for instance, Kara Mehemed, Ak Ali. In most cases I have no note of the appellation attached to any particular officer. The running numbers of brigades and regiments are mine, introduced for the sake of clearness and brevity; the official *ordres de bataille* commenced always with No. 1 for the brigades of each division, and No. 1 for the regiments of each brigade. Some regiments were commanded by majors, for want of

colonels or lieutenant-colonels, just as many battalions were commanded by captains, and many companies by lieutenants. Where I have omitted the names of the commanders of regiments, not knowing them, these were probably led by majors. I cannot claim absolute correctness for this *ordre de bataille*, having only rough notes to go by. The strength of the battalions was unequal, from 200 to 600; average, 450. Not having material showing the distribution of the artillery and cavalry among the divisions, I have given these arms in bulk.

NOTE 134. PAGE 436.

Most of my names are those given to the works by the Turkish troops, which differ from the Russian appellations. For instance, we called Bash Tabiya the Grivitza redoubt No. 2, whilst Kuropatkin confers the name Bash Tabiya upon one of the Janik Bair redoubts, an error arising, undoubtedly, from the false information given, intentionally or unintentionally, to the Russian authorities by spies, deserters, or prisoners. Where I have no note or recollection of the Turkish denomination (for instance, Brestovitz redoubt, Ternina road redoubt) I have introduced names of my own.

NOTE 135. PAGE 437.

Yeni Tabiya (meaning New Battery) was built between September 13 and October 1, on the western slope of the Janik Bair, where the Nikopoli road crosses it, across this road.

NOTE 136. PAGE 437.

Kütehük Tabiya (meaning Little Battery) was built in the last days of October, as an additional protection to the exposed and oft-attacked Yunuz Tabiya.

NOTE 137. PAGE 437.

Here is another confusion of names. Baghehé Tabiya means Garden Battery; the Russian writers call Baghlarbashi Tabiya 'Garden Redoubt.'

NOTE 138. PAGE 437.

Some of the last-named eleven redoubts of the Third Division were not built until November; I include them in my list to avoid repetitions. I have not the actual dates of their construction; roughly speaking, these ten redoubts (excluding the Vid bridge redoubt, which dates from the second battle) were erected between October 15 and November 15.

NOTE 139. PAGE 438.

This is the battalion of Volunteers of the Ottoman Union, which, in the *ordre de bataille*, is not included in the Fifth Division. The headquarters

consisted of a small redoubt or enclosure adjoining Araba Tabiya ; here the Mushir resided, with his staff, until the end. The tents were replaced by mud buildings when the weather became severe. On the whole, tents were not used after October, either by us or by the enemy, not only because earth huts afforded a better protection against the inclemency of the season, but also because the conspicuous appearance of canvas was found to offer a capital aim to the gunners.

NOTE 140. PAGE 438.

As with previous *ordres de bataille*, the running numbers of brigades and regiments are mine.

NOTE 141. PAGE 440.

Of the eighty-eight guns, fifty-two were 6-pounders, twenty-two 4-pounders, and fourteen 3-pounders. The distribution of the various calibres had been made in a manner to give to each brigade a fair proportion of 6-pounders and a share of the—for such an action almost useless—3-pounders.



APPENDIX C

TURKISH, AND OTHER WORDS USED IN GEOGRAPHICAL NOMENCLATURE, IN THE COMPOSITION OF PROPER NAMES AND NICKNAMES, OR OTHERWISE EMPLOYED IN THIS VOLUME

A.=Arabic; B.=Bulgarian; P.=Persian; Rou.=Roumanian; Ru.=Russian; S.=Servian. Where no indication is given, the word belongs to the Turkish language.

- Abd* (A.); servant
Abdul (A.); the Arabic proper names commencing with Abdul signify 'the servant of God,' the Deity being named by some attribute; for instance, Abdul Rahman, the servant of the Merciful
Abdullah (A.); the servant of God
Ada; island
Aga; official, master; also a title given to officials and officers of low rank, which in Arabic precedes the name, in Turkish follows it
Agach; tree
Agrisi; pain
Ak; white
Akbar (A.); great
Alai; regiment
Alaili; trooper; also an officer who has risen from the ranks
Araba; cart
Arabji; train soldier
Ashaga; lower
Aziz; beloved
- Baba*; father
Bagh; vineyard
Baghché; garden
- Baghlarbashi*; summit of the vineyards
Bair; hill
Bakal; grocer
Bakshish; alms, beer-money
Bash; head
Bash agrisi; headache
Bash chavush; head sergeant
Bashi; acc. sing. of *bash*, head, expressing possession; for instance, *binbashi*, a man who possesses 1,000 heads, *i.e.* a major. (The numerals are followed by the noun in the singular)
Bashi Bazouk; madman. (See Note 28, p. 445)
Bazar; market, mart
Beirak; standard, banner
Beirakdar; standard-bearer
Bey; lord; also a title given to colonels and lieutenant-colonels
Biéli (B.); white
Bin; thousand
Bin (A.); the son of
Binbashi; major
Bism (A.); in the name
Bismillah (A.); in the name of God
Boluk; company
Boluk emini; company's clerk

- Boyun* ; neck
Bunar ; source, spring
Burun ; nose ; figuratively, head-land, cape
Buyuk ; great
- Charkha* ; guardless sword
Chawush ; sergeant
Chéné ; chin
Chiftlik ; farm
Chok ; much
Czarevitch (Ru.) ; the son of the Czar
- Dagh* ; mountain
Daha ; more
Damad ; son-in-law
Dauid ; David
Dedashli (P.) ; broker
Dédé ; grandfather
Deli ; mad
Dellal (A.) ; ironmonger
Demir ; iron
Demir yol ; railway
Deniz ; sea
Derbend ; isthmus
Déré ; valley
Dêvé ; camel
Doborantzi (Rou.) ; territorial infantry
Dorna (B.) ; lower
Do svidania (S.) ; 'an revoir'
Dunarca (Rou.) ; Danube
Dunav (B., S.) ; Danube
- Effendi* ; gentleman, sir ; also a title given to officers below lieutenant-colonel rank ; for instance, Issa Effendi, Major Issa
Erkiani Harb ; General Staff
Erkiani Harb Mektebi ; school for General Staff officers
Eski ; old
Evet ; yes
Evret ; woman
Evel (A.) ; first
- Fena* ; bad
Ferik ; general of division
- Ferka* ; division
Frausiz ; French, Frenchman
- Ghazi* ; victorious
Ghiaur ; unbeliever
Gora (B.) ; mountain
Gorna (B.) ; upper
Grush ; piastre (100 to the lira)
- Haj* (A.) ; pilgrimage to Mecca
Haji (A.) ; pilgrim
Hamd (A.) ; praise
Hamid ; praiseworthy
Hané (Khané) ; house, building
Harb ; war
Hekim ; doctor
- Ibn* (A.) ; son
Ibrahim ; Abraham
Idadié ; military advanced school
Ikhtihat ; first reserves
Ingliz ; English, Englishman
Ism ; name
Istambouli ; Constantinople
Itch agrisi ; dysentery
- Kaim makam* ; lieutenant-colonel ; also governor of a district
Kalarashi (Rou.) ; mounted militia
Kalé ; castle
Kalpak ; cap
Kan ; blood
Kanli ; bloody
Kara ; black
Karlash (B.) ; small sailing vessel
Kavass ; policeman
Kerim ; noble
Khan ; inn
Khané ; house, building
Kiafir ; unbeliever, heathen
Kiatib ; clerk
Kishla ; barracks
Kini ; village
Kizil ; red
Kol ; arm (body) ; also wing of an army
Kol aghassi ; major's adjutant
Kol ordu ; corps
Kouak ; house, hotel, official building

Kulé; tower
Küpri; bridge
Kütchük; little
Kuyu; well, spring

Lakin; but
Lira; Turkish pound (18s.)
Liva; brigade

Mahalla; quarter of a town
Mahomed; see Muhamed
Mala (B.); quarter of a town
Malek; angel
Malek (A.); king
Malektijar (A.); chief of the merchants

Mali (B.); little
Mamaliga (B.); maize porridge
Mejid; glorious
Mekteb; school
Mekteb Harbi; military academy
Mektebli; scholar; also an officer who has passed his examination

Miralai; colonel
Mirliva; general of brigade
Mokaddem; reserves of the first ban

Moskoftu; Russian
Muhamed; the praised one
Muhendishané; gunnery school
Mulazim; lieutenant
Mushir; marshal
Mustafiz; last reserves

Nefer; private
Nizamié; acting army
Novi (B.); new

On; ten
Onbashi; corporal
Ordu; army, camp

Padishah; sultan
Palankah; fortress
Para; money; also a coin (forty to the piastre)
Pasha; lord, prince; also a title given to generals

Pashmushnik (Ru.); adjutant, assistant
Pek; very, much
Planina (B., S.); mountains

Rahamin (A.); compassionate
Rahim (A.); merciful
Ramazán; the Mahomedan month of fasting
Redif; reserves
Rička (B.); stream
Rossiori (Rou.); red hussars, regular cavalry
Rumili; Turkey-in-Europe
Rushdié; military elementary school

Sanjak; standard; also a district
Sanjankdar; standard-bearer
Selo (B.); village
Serai; palace
Seraskier; Minister of War
Seraskierat; Ministry of War
Serdar; commander
Serdar ekrem; commander-in-chief
Severim; I love
Sevmek; to love
Shitan; devil
Slivovitz (S.); plum-brandy
Soilémek; to speak
Soilémémek; not to speak
Spanioles; Turkish Jews of Spanish or Portuguese descent
Stari (B.); old
Su; water, river
Suleiman; Solomon

Tabiya; battery, redoubt
Tabor; battalion
Tajir (A.), pl. *tijar*; merchant
Tali; reserves of the second ban
Tallié; chasseur
Tash; stone
Tchai; stream
Tcherni (B.); black
Tchihad; holy war
Tépé; hill
Tershané; arsenal
Tesslim; surrender
Tijar (A.); merchants
Tuna; Danube

<i>Tütün</i> ; tobacco	<i>Yeni</i> ; new
<i>Tütünji</i> ; tobaceonist	<i>Yeshil</i> ; green
	<i>Yok</i> ; no, none
<i>Veliki</i> (B.); great	<i>Yokara</i> ; upper
<i>Vilayeti</i> ; country, province	<i>Yol</i> ; way, road
<i>Vitch</i> (Ru.); the son of (preceded by the name or title)	<i>Yussuf</i> ; Joseph
<i>Voda</i> (B.); water, river	<i>Yüz</i> ; hundred
	<i>Yüzباشi</i> ; captain
<i>Yaver</i> ; aide-de-camp	<i>Zalısé</i> ; reserves of the third ban
<i>Yedi</i> ; seven	<i>Zalısé</i> (A.); third
	<i>Zani</i> (A.); second
	<i>Zaptié</i> ; gendarme

The Turkish numerals are: *Bir*, 1; *iki*, 2; *üç*, 3; *dört*, 4; *beş*, 5; *altı*, 6; *yedi*, 7; *sekiz*, 8; *dokuz*, 9; *on*, 10; *yirmi*, 20; *otuz*, 30; *kırk*, 40; *elli*, 50; *altmış*, 60; *yetmiş*, 70; *seksen*, 80; *doksan*, 90; *yüz*, 100; *bin*, 1,000. *Bin sekiz yüz doksan dört* = 1894.

INDEX

A. = Asia; A. M. = Asia Minor; C. = Constantinople; P. = Plevna; Rou = Roumania; Ru = Russia; S. = Servia; W. = Widdin.

Where no indication is given, or where the explanation is not self-evident, the locality belongs (or belonged in 1877) to Turkey-in-Europe.

- ABCHASIA (Ru.), rebellion in, 117, 228
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Abdul Hamid II., Sultan, 2, 3, 115, 118, 123, 297, 302, 303, 307, 308, 309, 312, 345, 443, 446, 448, 449, 463
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